

LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

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No. 1243.—VOL. XLVIII.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 26, 1887.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["VIOLET!" EXCLAIMED DR. ROCHE IN SURPRISE. "YOU LOOK LIKE A GHOST! WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING?"]

OH! GIVE HIM BACK TO ME!

CHAPTER XIII.

A BRIGHT IDEA.

LADY STAPLETON prided herself on her independence, and would not acknowledge that she was bound to drag a companion with her wherever she went, because she happened to be the widow of a peer. Therefore she appeared at the Priory by one train, and her maid by another; and she shocked Lady Mayne by driving up to the door alone in a common cab!

After a long visit to the sickroom she came out, her lips pressed together with the consciousness of a firm resolution. What this resolution was she confided to no one, but buried it as deeply as possible in her own breast.

"As soon as the poor girl is a little better you must let her come down with me to Somersetshire, and I engage to return her

to you perfectly healthy and perfectly happy before the autumn."

"Healthy I hope she may be, but happy—never—so long as that wretched husband of hers exists!" said Lady Mayne, with a sigh. "Oh! why didn't we know what was to follow when we gave our consent so easily! I had a foreboding of something dreadful all the time."

"I can't say I had," said Lady Stapleton, with a smile. "I took a fancy to Jack the moment I saw him; and even now I can't help thinking that he is under some delusion, or he never would have behaved so extraordinarily."

"He is either a lunatic or a scoundrel!" said Lady Mayne, impatiently. "And I must say the news of his death would give me sincere pleasure."

"My dear Mary!" and Lady Stapleton looked quite shocked, although she knew that the gentlest of mothers will turn fierce when the happiness of a child is injured.

She did not stay very long at the Priory; but she heard a great deal in praise of the absent master from the faithful old housekeeper, Mrs.

Milton, who was only too glad of a listener; and told story after story, which plainly showed that, instead of always having been a monster, there was a time when Jack Sartoris was a kind-hearted fellow, ever ready to give a helping hand to anyone in trouble.

Lady Stapleton pondered over these traits of character, and found it hard to reconcile them with his treatment of her niece. More than ever she longed for a personal interview with him, feeling sure that a few words would set everything right; but she did not see her way to it. She could have gone to his bankers and found out his address—that was not her difficulty; but she felt that it would be beneath her dignity as the sister of Lord Mayne to take the first step towards a reconciliation. And yet on the day she left her heart was so wrung with pity for her niece that she vowed to herself, if an opportunity came in her way, nothing should induce her to let it slip, even if the whole Mayne family rose up in anger against her.

Full of undefined projects, she came up to town, and on arriving at Victoria Station was so deep in thought that she got out of the

train before it had stopped. She would have had a serious fall if a gentleman who was standing on the platform had not darted forward and caught her literally in his arms.

"Lady Stapleton!" he exclaimed, in surprise; and then he stooped to pick up a sunshade which she had dropped, and she recovered enough breath to thank him.

"You have the advantage over me," she said, with a courteous smile. "Your name has slipped my memory."

His face grew stern, as he drew himself up stiffly. Raising his hat, he said slowly, "Jack Sartoris, very much at your service." And feeling that she probably looked upon him as the greatest scoundrel that ever went unhung, he turned away without any further proffer of help. But Lady Stapleton, when she saw an opportunity, generally knew how to grasp it.

"Mr. Sartoris," she said faintly, "would you do me a further kindness and put me into a brougham, if you can find one?"

Instantly his face brightened. Evidently there was one member of the Mayne family who did not regard him as an outcast, and he went in search of a carriage with alacrity.

When he had found one, put her into it, seen that her luggage was placed on the box, &c., then he was marching off again in a great hurry; but she looked out of the window, and said—

"Are you really the Mr. Sartoris who married my niece? You don't look a bit like him."

"I am that brute, as I suppose you call him," with a short laugh; "but I had a fever out there, which changed my appearance, though unfortunately not my identity. A pity I didn't die—I'm sure you think so," trying futilely to make a hole in the platform with his stick.

Lady Stapleton thought of her sister-in-law's hasty wish, and answered more heartily than she otherwise would have done—

"I'm sure I don't, Mr. Sartoris. Will you think it very odd if I ask you to call upon an old woman like myself at the Buckingham Palace Hotel at four to-morrow?"

Her heart beat rather fast as she thought of the bold step which she was taking, after all her resolutions to the contrary; but a subtle impulse seemed to draw her on against her will, and she watched his face breathlessly.

A bright smile shone out across his gravity, and for the first time it reminded her of the Jack Sartoris she used to know.

"I don't know about the oddness; but I understand the kindness," he said, simply. "I will do myself the honour to call at four."

Then he bowed low, and walked away with a more cheerful look on his face than it had worn since his return to England; and Lady Stapleton drove to her hotel with a confident conviction that the mystery would soon be cleared away, and her niece be made happy in spite of everything.

The next day she felt quite excited as the hour for the interview drew near. She trembled to think what would happen if Bertie Mayne casually dropped in, and found himself face to face with his brother-in-law.

They could not come to blows under her nose, but "the situation would be strained," as they say in diplomacy, and it would be an uncomfortable moment for all three.

Lady Stapleton was about five-and-forty, of a rather imposing presence, with a good-looking, fair, aristocratic face, and an exceedingly charming manner.

She was dressed very handsomely in silver grey, and wore a cap of delicate lace on her glossy brown hair.

Altogether she was a pleasant specimen of English womanhood, and so Jack Sartoris found her when he was ushered into her comfortable sitting-room at the hour named.

She received him with a certain amount of reserve at first, which she considered only due to her brother's family. But this gradually gave way before the charm of his simple manner.

They talked long and very gravely, the discussion only being interrupted by the arrival of tea. Over the tea they grew more confidential, and she elicited the fact that he had written to his wife a fortnight ago, which proved conclusively that he wished for peace. She was exulting over this, whilst he was gloomily remembering that to his last appeal he had received no answer.

"But, my dear Mr. Sartoris, how could you expect it?" she exclaimed, cheerfully. "The poor girl has been on a sick bed ever since her accident; and, really, at one time we were afraid that she would never get over it."

"She has been ill?" hoarsely, whilst the blood rushed up into his face, and his heart stood still.

"Ill? I should think she had. And you were in England and never came near her," her voice growing reproachful. "Fancy, if she had died, and this quarrel had never been ended?"

There was a silence, during which the noise of the traffic outside was the only sound in the room. Then Sartoris drew a deep breath, and said, huskily—

"What do you say of those who kept the news from me? Good Heaven! when I think of it," clenching his hands, whilst the veins on his forehead swelled like small ropes. "They call themselves Christians, and behave with the cruelty of savages."

"I don't agree with you," calmly. "You had cast the poor girl off. It wasn't for them to call you—it was for you to go."

"I would have gone if she had shown the smallest sign of wanting me. But year after year I heard sufficient to keep me away, with intense bitterness, as he stared dully at the carpet.

Lady Stapleton looked at him reflectively. "What do you mean? Violet has lived like a recluse; seeing no one—going nowhere."

"A recluse who gives dances, with no one to chaperon her."

"Ah! I heard of that escapade. It was the night of Cyril Landon's wedding. You must remember there was a good deal of excitement to be worked off."

A scornful look flashed from his eyes, and then his expression changed. He remembered that since he had seen it that small brown head had been in danger; and in a voice that vibrated with deepest feeling he asked for every detail.

Lady Stapleton gave a full and graphic account from the moment when Violet fell into the water—by accident, as she supposed—the true version being kept from her till now, when she was creeping back to life, looking like a ghost of her former self.

He listened with his heart in his eyes, hanging on every word, absorbed with the thought that his young wife might actually have gone to the rest, which is never broken, whilst he was in London only a few miles from her!

Lady Stapleton soon saw that he was as anxious as anyone could be to make up the quarrel; and suddenly a bright idea flashed into her mind by which she thought it could be effected.

She pondered over it for some time, wondering whether it would bear the light of day, or whether it was too ridiculously like a play. Before Jack Sartoris took his leave she could not resist the temptation of imparting it to him.

To her surprise he caught it at eagerly, and soon their chairs were drawn closer together, and their voices lowered to the most confidential tones.

"It would be a fresh start, wouldn't it?" she said, when at last he stood up to go; "and if it fails we shall only be where we were before. Mind, not a soul must know of it!" holding up her finger. "Everything depends on the most profound secrecy!"

"You may count on me to hold my tongue. I can't say how grateful I am to you, Lady Stapleton," as he pressed her hand.

"Not at all. It will be quite a piece of fun.

I shall enjoy it intensely, and I shall expect an invitation to Farnham Court for Christmas."

"You won't need an invitation! You know you'll be always welcome; if only—" with a deep-drawn breath.

"Keep up your courage! All will come right in the end!"

With this cheerful admonition she parted from him at the door, and he went down the steps of the hotel with a new hope in his heart. What would come of it he could not tell, but it was something to have one ray of comfort in the gloom.

CHAPTER XIV.

FRIEND OR ENEMY.

CYRIL LONDON and his bride enjoyed their honeymoon as much as a pair of children out for a holiday.

Mabel had never been abroad before, but had passed most of her quiet life in the Rectory at Leighton, popping into the cottage of her poorer neighbours like a gleam of sunshine on a rainy day, or gravely teaching a knitting class in the village school.

They did not rush from place to place with the speed of the average tourists, but stayed a week or more in any spot which seemed especially to strike their fancy.

They were neither of them very strong, so they did not choose to endanger their lives in wild attempts to reach the top of a mountain which would probably be wrapped in mist, if anyone was lucky enough to get there; but they were attracted by the side of lovely lakes, and made acquaintances, and sometimes friends, with dangerous facility.

What with water-parties and picnics, the time passed so pleasantly that the servants at Landon Lodge thought their master and mistress were never coming home.

The cook made up her mind that they would get lost "in those furria' parts," and was always telling Warren, the butler, that he would have to start soon to see after them, so he had better find out what time the boat sailed.

Warren hated the idea of a sea-voyage more than penal servitude, and refused to acquire the unnecessary information, which became a fruitful source of quarrel between him and Mrs. Forrest.

Day after day she would ask how much luggage he thought of taking with him, or if all his socks were well mended up, for she would not like "them farriers" to hold him cheap, and see him badly provided; to all of which Warren vouchsafed no answer, except an angry sniff, which made the maids giggle.

Meanwhile everything had been done to make the place look charming. It was a pretty old house built of grey stone, and plentifully adorned with creepers, through which the pointed windows looked out like the eyes of a skye-terrier through his shaggy hair.

Just a place fit for a pair of lovers, with shady walks in a tangled shrubbery, where they could always be lost to sight, and roses of every sort and hue ready to be picked by the one for the other, and nightingales to sing to them of ceaseless longing, and the pleasant home always waiting to welcome them back like two doves to their nest.

At last the day arrived which the Londs had fixed for their return; and as soon as the sound of wheels was heard all the servants gathered under the porch to greet their master and mistress.

The carriage and pair drove up to the door in spirited style. A foreign-looking man, with a black beard and a slouched hat, sprang down from the box, and pulled open the door just as Warren had stretched out his hand to the handle. The butler frowned, but the next moment his master was shaking hands with him, with his old winning smile, and the small affront was forgotten in the joy of seeing him back again safe and sound.

Cyril turned round to help his wife out of the carriage, and they noticed that she stepped down with difficulty, although he almost lifted her.

"My wife had the misfortune to hurt her ankle on board," he explained, as she stood by his side, smiling sweetly on all their eager faces, but leaning heavily on her husband's arm. "Our famous air will make it all right soon, won't it, Mrs. Forrest?"

"Indeed, sir, I hope it may," she said, heartily, as Mabel put her hand into hers. "And, begging your pardon miss—ma'am," correcting herself hastily, "I know of a certain cure for sprains or bruises if you wouldn't object to trying it?"

"I shouldn't object at all," with a smile, "and I shall be very grateful." Then, with a nod and a kindly word to all, Cyril hurried her into the drawing-room, and placed her with tender care on the sofa.

"Oh, let me look at the garden first!" she pleaded. "I'm sure it's lovely!"

"It isn't bad; but you must rest first, and have a glass of wine. Now I must go and tell Warren to look after Karl. I am sorry we forgot to mention him, so they won't know where to put him."

"Do you think they will like him?" leaning back on the pale blue cushions, and looking fair and fragile as a delicate piece of china.

"No; sure to hate him. But it can't be helped. I don't want to lose sight of him; as if we go abroad for the winter he would be invaluable?" Then he stooped over her and kissed her fondly, whispering, "Darling, welcome to your home!"

She looked up into his face with love that amounted to adoration in her eyes.

"Oh, Cyril!" she said, with a quiver in her voice, "I feel as if we were too happy to live!"

"To die you mean!" he said, softly. "Life is for the happy. And as long as we have each other, I don't think we could ever exactly wish for death. Even the decrepit and homeless stick to life as long as they can, so you and I will cling on to it with both hands, in spite of a sprained ankle between us."

So he ended with a light laugh, and after a glance through the window at the garden, he picked a rose from the verandah, threw it to his wife, and sauntered out of the room, humming some air from a popular opera as he went.

Life seemed as fair as a cloudless summer day to Cyril Landon at that moment. His matrimonial venture had turned out just as he expected. The more he knew of Mabel the more he loved her and the deeper grew his trust. They were exactly suited to each other in every way, and were as happy together as possible.

Still this perfect affection did not make him indifferent to all the rest of the world, and he was quite excited on hearing that his dearest friend, Violet Sartoris, was staying with her aunt at Holly Bank, and said he would ride over the next day to see her.

Having placed Mabel on a sofa with a bunch of roses on her lap, a light shawl thrown over her feet, any amount of cushions behind her back, and the nicest book to amuse her, he started off, riding slowly through the deep Somersetshire lanes, and casting eager glances right and left to see how his native county was looking after his long absence. After all, he thought there was no country like England, as the sunshine played on a brawling brook, and the corn held up its head with a golden promise for the future. The trees were full of foliage, the grass looked fresh and green; the cattle standing in the fields were of a handsome breed and well fed. There was peace and prosperity all around, and he felt he could almost boast with more fulness of content. And then in the midst of his joy, he recollected that the Scotch have a superstitious idea that excessively high spirits generally precede a misfortune.

But what misfortune could come to him? They were safe in their home, and no one was likely to set it on fire; it was well guarded and

protected, so that if burglars tried to get in they were sure to fail. There was no epidemic in the village; in fact, there was nothing which could rouse the smallest anxiety.

Dr. Roche, who had been sent for at once, said that the injury to Mabel's ankle was only trifling, and would soon be put right by a bandage and rest, so he need not fidget himself on that score. Just as he had come to the satisfactory conclusion that he was as fortunate as Polydorus of old, he spied a lady, dressed in white, coming slowly along the lane, picking ferns and wild flowers on her way.

"Violet!" he exclaimed in surprise, and the next moment sprang off his horse, and seized her hand in warmest welcome. "So delighted to find you. I was just coming over to see you. But what have you done to yourself?" looking down into her lovely face with horrified eyes. "You look like a ghost! Oh, my poor child!" intense pity in his voice.

"Hush, don't pity me!" taking her hand away. "I am so happy here with my aunt. You don't know how kind she is to me!"

"She would be a brute if she weren't. But have you been ill?"

"Yes; I don't know how it was," looking puzzled. "I think it was a blow on the head, and yet somebody said I was nearly drowned. Very odd not to know, isn't it?" with a slight smile.

"Rather," he said, more distressed than he liked to show, and vaguely alarmed by her words.

Then he looked up at the sky, over which a cloud had crept, which was now sending a heavy shower down upon their heads. As quickly as possible he tied up his horse to a gate-post, then took her hand, and drawing it through his arm hurried her along, saying,—

"Come to Barnby's shed! It will be over in a minute."

The shed was filled with agricultural implements, but he found a seat for her, and then taking out his pocket handkerchief began to wipe the ribbons on her hat.

Now that she was bare-headed, and flushed with the short run, she looked more like herself, but still he could see there was a great change in her, and the old anger rose up in his heart against Jack Sartoris.

She asked affectionately after Mabel, and questioned him about his foreign experiences.

"Oh, I've a host of things to tell you," he said, with an amused smile, as he thought of their multitudinous adventures. "But when Lady Stapleton will let you go, you must come over and stay with us. I should love to have you under my own roof."

"Mrs. Sartoris, I have brought you an umbrella," said a gruff voice; and Landon, turning quickly, saw a man whom he took for a stranger, standing in the opening of the shed, with an umbrella in his hand.

The stranger was pale, broad-shouldered, tall, and good-looking; but what struck Cyril most was that he was looking at him with splendid eyes, that seemed to be actually blazing with concentrated passion, as if an enemy had suddenly started up to accuse him of some fearful wrong.

He was so thunderstruck by the man's expression that he could not speak, and it was Violet who said, a slight blush rising to her cheeks, "Thank you so much, Mr. St. John. How good of you to come! I was fortunate enough to meet Mr. Landon, who brought me in here, or I should have been wet through."

"Lady Stapleton was anxious about you. I had no idea you were going so far," his back turned to Landon, as if he hated the sight of him. "You would have done much better if you had come straight home."

Cyril stared at him with resentful eyes, and said, gravely,—

"If you had gone straight home, Mrs. Sartoris, you would have been soaked to the skin. Don't you think it was better to have a little patience and wait?"

"I would rather you had been soaked," said Mr. St. John, in a low voice. He meant the

words for Violet's ears alone, but Cyril overheard them, and his passion rose in a minute.

"Thank Heaven," he said, fervently, "there was an old friend with you who knew how to take care of you."

Mr. St. John frowned, and the blood rushed to his face. He looked as if a torrent of the fiercest words were about to break from him, and then he controlled himself by a violent effort of will.

"Don't you think you could trust yourself to me, Mrs. Sartoris, as well as to the oldest friend you had in the world?" His eyes were fixed upon hers imploringly, as if he would force her to make the answer he was longing for.

Her cheeks grew pink as she looked doubtfully from one to the other. She could not understand why she was so drawn to this stranger, whom she had only known for a fortnight; that she could not at once take Cyril's part, though she had known him nearly all her life. With her sweetest smile she said,—

"I could trust myself to either—"

"Then I will leave you to Mr. St. John," said Cyril, indignant at being put into the same category as this man who had just turned up.

"Mr. St. John," said Violet, quickly, "I want you two to be friends."

The stranger made no response. Cyril only bowed, and went off in a huff.

This, as a beginning of friendship, did not look promising.

CHAPTER XV.

DANGERS AHEAD.

A PLEASURE, as strange as it was new, seemed to have brought a refreshing influence on Violet's life. Why was it that this year, more than any other, the flowers had a richer bloom, the sunshine a brighter glow, the present a halo which had not belonged to it for years? Was it because her illness had brought a deadening effect upon her memory, and made her forget much that was acutely painful before? Or was it that Lady Stapleton made her house seem like a home to her, and saved her from the loneliness that had oppressed her at the Priory? It could not merely be accounted for by the presence of this Mr. St. John, whom she had never seen before.

She had been rather impatient of all attentions from the other sex of late; but she did not seem to object when he laid a rose in her breakfast plate, or gave up his fishing, because she was going out for a walk.

His company never bored her; his conversation was never tiring. He was always at her disposal, but not obtrusively so, for he knew when to go away when she seemed to wish to be alone.

She was in a dreamy state, content to let herself drift, so she did not harass her aunt with questions about this new old friend, whom she had never heard of before; and she raised up no barriers between them as she had done in the case of Ralph Armitage.

Then she was on her guard, and always ready to stand on the defensive. Now she had no fear, and no remembrance of danger, so she let herself be her own true, natural self; and was as charming to Mr. St. John as she had once been to Jack Sartoris.

Cyril Landon looked on in deep disgust, wondering that Lady Stapleton did not see what was going on under her nose.

Once he ventured to remonstrate, but she only laughed as if it were a capital joke, and told him he had better keep away, so as not to spoil the fun.

He did keep away for some time, and then told himself that he was not doing his duty by Violet at all. In the character of her oldest friend he was bound to watch over her, and see she came to no harm; so he appeared again at Holly Bank, and the two men glared at each other like two cats over the same mouse.

Little did Landon understand the play which was being acted before his eyes. Much evil would have been spared if one of the conspirators had taken him into her confidence.

He would have thrown himself heart and soul into the game, and given St. John a helping hand if he could; but Lady Stapleton was conscious that her attempt might be called ridiculous, and she was terribly afraid of being laughed at, so she held her peace when she ought to have spoken, and grew irritated with Landon for always trying to upset her projects.

She was expecting a stream of visitors whom she could not put off, having invited them when she thought Violet wanted cheering up.

Now she would have given anything to tell them not to come; but if she alleged her niece's presence as a reason for keeping quiet, reports would be sure to get about that her mind was affected, and she could not say she was going away when nothing was further from her thoughts.

Therefore, in some anxiety of mind, she waited to see what turn events would take, and as she could not do very much herself to help them on, she was content to leave them in the hands of Providence.

Meanwhile, what were the feelings of Jack Sartoris himself—for the reader will have guessed that Mr. St. John was Violet's husband?

Under the same roof with his wife, yet obliged to behave as if she no more belonged to him than to that "intrusive puppy," Cyril Landon—forced to look on whilst the man whom he hated called his wife by her Christian name, and showed her every sign of affection—obliged to keep in the rage with which his heart was bursting, for fear of scaring his lost Violet from his side for ever.

From one point of view it was a comedy, over which Lady Stapleton often smiled with intense amusement; but it had the elements of a tragedy in it, and in her amusement there was a touch of fear.

Coming down to dinner one evening before the rest of the company had assembled, Mr. St. John threw himself into a chair, and took up the *Globe*, imagining himself to be the only person of the whole party who was down in time.

Presently he was surprised by the sound of voices in the colonnade outside the window, and pricked up his ears, for he recognised his wife's. What was this that she was saying so fervently?

"I owe you more than I can ever pay."

Good Heavens! was she speaking to Landon? He started up, and strode towards the window determined to see who it was, and to interrupt them if he could.

"You owe me nothing," said the other voice, passionately—not Cyril Landon's, but another's. Were there dangers on every side? "But I can't help thinking that you belong to me in a sort of way after that. There would have been no Violet Sartoris to distract us all if it had not been for Ralph Armitage."

He had actually possessed himself of her hands, and was looking down into her face with glowing eyes, whilst she was shrinking from him, gratitude lost in a feeling of repulsion.

Mr. St. John stepped out of the open window, and, with a little cry, she almost sprang towards him, wrenching her hands from Armitage's grasp in frantic haste.

A wonderful change came over Jack's face as he saw how instinctively she turned to him to help her in her need. All the anger went out of it, and he looked down at her, his broad chest heaving, his eyes full of unutterable tenderness, whilst Armitage watched him curiously.

At first he could scarcely command his voice sufficiently to speak, so there was a perceptible pause before he said,—

"Scarcely prudent to be out without a shawl. Won't you come back into the drawing-room?"

Lady Stapleton looked out at the three with an anxious look on her face, wondering how the meeting had passed off between the two men who had known each other slightly in the days gone by, and now met once more as strangers.

Armitage was looking as if he would like to bite somebody, Violet was flushed and embarrassed, St. John seemed as if his usual composure had been upset.

"Mr. Armitage, let me introduce you to an old friend of mine, Mr. St. John," she said quietly, her eyes still watching him to see if he suspected that he was being taken in.

His face gave no clue to his thoughts, as he bowed, but he presently turned to Violet when the others were engaged in conversation, and asked her if this Mr. St. John were an old friend of hers, as well as of her aunt's.

"Oh, no!" said Violet, innocently, not knowing how far from the truth her words were. "I never met him before, but he came to Holly Bank almost as soon as I arrived."

"He has been walking and driving with you all this time?"

"Whenever I wanted him he came, of course, as any gentleman would," gravely, though inwardly conscious that her cheeks were flaming.

"He had better look out," muttered Armitage, angrily.

Violet drew herself up, and he saw he had made a mistake, but the entrance of the rest of the guests, and Cyril Landon, who had driven over from the Lodge, created a diversion, and presently they all filed into the dining-room, Mr. St. John, to Armitage's supreme disgust, giving his arm to Mrs. Sartoris.

Days passed, and although the outward aspect of affairs was cheerful enough, there was an under-current of ill-feeling which boded no good to some of the people there.

Mr. Armitage created a sensation, of which he was unaware, by suddenly announcing that Lady Jane was staying with the Forresters, about ten miles off, and proposed to pay a visit to Holly Bank before leaving Somersetshire.

They were all seated at breakfast when he stated this, so that every face was exposed to the stare of many eyes.

Lady Stapleton felt her heart sink within her breast, but she was a woman of admirable courage, and never lost her presence of mind.

She kept her eyes resolutely away from her confederate, and said, after a moment's hurried reflection,—

"So kind of Lady Jane to think of us, but I'm afraid you must tell her that my house is full," and then she ventured to look up, and saw that Jack's usually pale face was crimson. She knew that Ralph Armitage had seen it too, and felt as if she could boxed St. John's ears, but instead of that she had to listen with a polite smile to the former, as he explained that his sister only meant to ride over to luncheon or five o'clock tea.

"Then you must ask her to fix a day, as we have so many engagements," she said, as a forlorn hope.

"No, that might bother you," he said carelessly.

"Jane won't mind taking her chance," an answer which filled two hearts with dismay. If Lady Jane came trooping down on them, and found Jack Sartoris masquerading under the name of St. John, all would be lost. Her appearance on the scene would mean the ruin of all their hopes, and Jack would have to go back to his old solitary life, embittered by a fresh disappointment. This must be avoided at any cost, and Lady Stapleton determined that she would not sacrifice either husband or wife for the sake of a caprice of Lady Jane's.

"But I should mind very much," she said, courteously; "and you must insist on her letting us know, so that we mayn't miss her."

"Do you know my sister?" Armitage asked suddenly, as Mr. St. John was in the act of helping himself to mustard. The spoon fell down on the snow-white damask, and with an expression of annoyance he bent forward to scrape the yellowish stain with the point of his knife, as he said gravely—"I had that honour once."

"Does she know you are here?"

"Certainly not."

"Then it would be a pleasant surprise for her to meet you here," with a peculiar smile.

"A surprise! but I don't flatter myself any further," which was the exact truth.

"Jack! what are we to do?" Lady Stapleton asked, in agitated tones, so soon as she had caught him alone. "Don't you see, you may come face to face on the road."

"I won't go on the road."

"She may surprise you in a game of tennis."

"I won't play tennis."

"Nonsense, there is no help for it. You must go away."

"I can't. Lady Stapleton, anything but that," he said imploringly. "I would rather die than go away."

"Well, don't die; because we couldn't bring you back again as we hope to do when Lady Jane's gone. She can't stay more than a fortnight, and that's not much."

"A fortnight!" he cried in horror. "It would seem like an eternity."

(To be continued.)

IVY'S PERIL.

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CHAPTER VIII.

WE left Paul Beresford turned from the door of the millionaire's residence in Coningsby-street, with the curt information that the family had gone to the seaside—somewhere south.

Paul felt as though his brain were on fire; he could hardly take in the whole case calmly enough to form a collected judgment. This sudden departure, coming as it did on the top of his grievous fears for Ivy's health, and honest William Campbell's outspoken opinion of her temporary guardian, utterly unmanned him. He walked down Coningsby-street with the faltering, irregular gait of one who has taken too much drink; he never thought of going near the "Security." His mind had room but for one thought, one idea—Ivy.

He went straight back to his chambers in Cecil-street, Strand, and sat down to try and form some theory of George White's motives. He grew calmer now; he had thrown the window wide open, and the chill cold air of the February morning came in and fanned his temples pleasantly. Moreover, as he watched the crowded waters of gallant Father Thames, a thought of comfort came to him; he remembered words of Ivy's as they two walked together along the Embankment, and watched the ever varying scene before them.

"I think true love is like the river," the girl had said, half shyly, half proudly, as she walked at her lover's side and listened to his glad pictures of the life they would lead together.

"That is a strange simile," said Paul gently.

"Why do you think so, sweetheart?"

"Because nothing can change its course," returned Ivy. "Its current may be slow or rapid, its waters turbid or clear and bright, but nothing can stop their passage on and on until they reach the ocean. And true love, Paul, goes on and on till death."

With the memory of these words Paul grew less wretched; the girl, who had told him death alone could check true love, would not forsake him, whatever calamities were spoken of him in her hearing. Ivy might be anxious,

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may, she might even doubt, but she would never cast him off until they two had stood face to face, and she had heard his own defence.

Under this reassuring certainty, Paul could look more quietly into the mystery which seemed to baffle him. It was, of course, possible that Mr. White and his sister had no evil designs against Ivy's love affairs; it was possible they decided quite suddenly to go south, and that a letter containing the news, and giving their full address, was even now awaiting him at Edinburgh. Luckily Mrs. Campbell had promised to send on his letters promptly, so to-morrow morning's post would decide this question.

Had he never distrusted George White, had Mr. Campbell not told him frankly there was an ugly secret in the man's life, Paul would have accepted this favourable view of the millionaire's conduct, and waited at least till the morrow with tolerable patience, though in much disappointment. But as things were, his mind dwelt much more on the possibilities of foul play. Would anyone, his suspicions demanded, as well known and opulent as George White have shut up his house and dismissed his establishment at a minute's notice without some startling cause. Would any wealthy family decamp, as it were, and leave no address behind them unless they had some urgent motive for secrecy?

Paul had only got so far in his musings when a bright idea flashed on him; besides the house in Coningsby-street Mr. White occupied offices in the City.

It was hardly likely he had deserted these without leaving some address, as Paul remembered the packs of letters it had been his duty to answer every morning. He felt that George White could not have risked losing his vast correspondence.

Paul's misery lessened with this thought; here at least was something to be done, or at least attempted; and in his present mood anything in the world was preferable to sitting down to inaction.

He did not take a cab this time. He could not have given the wings of his own impatience to the horse, and it was a relief to him to tride along at a furious pace, and feel that every step brought him nearer to tidings of his darling.

The offices were not deserted. Paul drew a breath of satisfaction as he noticed the familiar name still on the door, and he knocked eagerly for admittance.

Mr. White had not engaged a second private secretary, but contented himself with a young man whom he termed his clerk, and whose duties consisted in occupying a high stool in the outer office from ten till four, delivering messages in Mr. White's absence, and ushering in callers to his private sanctum when he was to be seen.

Paul had marvelled not a little at the arrangement, and had been much surprised at the clerk finally selected from about two hundred applicants.

John Dudley (he never aspired to "Mr." until he obtained his post at the millionaire's) was about twenty. He wrote a very good hand, was remarkably punctual and orderly, but beyond these qualities he had nothing to recommend him.

He was most incorrigibly dull—a writing-machine would have fulfilled his duties equally as well. John obeyed his employer to the minutest detail; in fact, his obedience was so liberal that there had been more than one laugh in Coningsby-street at his expense.

It was alleged by Mr. White—but this may have been exaggeration—he once despatched Dudley with a letter to a friend staying at the Charing Cross Hotel, with instructions to wait for an answer.

The friend had left London for the day, and was not expected until eleven. It was then just noon, but John Dudley planted his back patiently against the door of the absentee, and prepared to undergo his eleven hours of waiting as contentedly as possible.

The story went that at five o'clock, amazed at his delay, Mr. White sent after him, and scolded him, roundly for being such a simpleton.

This was always remembered against John as an instance of his profound denseness, and Paul recalled it with great relief as soon as he saw the clerk's shock head.

John Dudley might be stupid, and wearisome, but he was incapable of fraud. Whatever he said might be implicitly relied upon, for even had he received instructions to act a part his nature was unable to sustain it. If obedience to his superior made him attempt it he would bungle the affair so terribly as to make the truth transparent.

This young man stared at Paul Beresford much as though he had been a runaway hyena or any other pet captive escaped from the Zoological Gardens.

Paul felt provoked at his distended eyes. What did the fellow mean by expressing so much surprise at his appearance? Wasn't it the most natural thing in the world that Ivy Carew's lover should visit her temporary guardian?

"Is Mr. White in?"

"He is not!" replied Dudley, shortly.

"When will he be?"

"I don't know!"

The young man possibly imagined his questioner would depart, but Paul had no such intentions. He coolly seated himself on the only chair Mr. Dudley's little room possessed, and looked as though he meant to stay some time.

"When was he here last?" was the next demand.

"He's been gone about an hour; went to catch the one o'clock train."

This was something, at any rate; but, alas! not much. There are so many places to which providence and railway companies have allotted one o'clock trains.

"Where was he going to?"

John Dudley stared hard at the very small fire, and finally got off his stool and poked it violently with a very large poker. Not in the least perturbed at this transparent device, Paul repeated his question.

"Mr. White lives in Coningsby-street," returned the young clerk. "Haden't you better go and make inquiries there?"

Mr. Beresford turned round, and looked at John with smothered contempt.

"I knew you had not many brains," he said scornfully; "but I thought you were honest. Don't try fencing with me, but answer a plain question truthfully. Where are your employer and his family?"

"He said I was not to tell you."

"That's right," said Paul, in quite another tone; "he's your master, and I suppose you've a right to obey him if you like, only don't try and bamboozle me. I expect you know perfectly Mr. White has left London almost at a moment's notice, and taken Miss Carew away, so that I should not be able to discover her whereabouts?"

"It's not his fault," observed the clerk slowly, and looking Paul Beresford in the face. "If I had been in his place I should have done just the same."

The idea of the bilious-looking, round-faced youth in the place of the powerful millionaire was almost too much for Paul. Troubled as he was, a smile passed over his face.

"Perhaps, as you defend Mr. White so warmly, you are aware of his motive in hiding Miss Carew from her future husband?"

"I know why he is hiding her from you," returned the youth frankly. "He told me all about it; he said it might be a warning to me."

"Perhaps, in your turn, you will tell me. Although it is about myself, I believe it will be complete news."

"Mr. White didn't say I was to tell you."

"Did he order you not to?"

"No."

"Then you'd better gratify my curiosity," returned Paul, gravely.

The youthful clerk looked a little taken aback. He gazed at Mr. Beresford with profound admiration.

"My!" he said at last, "you do take it cool. Why, if I'd done a barefaced thing like that I'd be ashamed to look at anyone who knew it."

"Once more, will you tell me what you mean? Speak plainly, please, I warn you. My patience is nearly exhausted."

"Why, you went and proposed to Miss Carew, the greatest heiress in England!"

"And was accepted; our engagement receiving her uncle's full approval."

"But he didn't know then. Bless you, Mr. Beresford, he found out the moment he got to Australia! The lady went up to his hotel, and told him you were her lawful wedded husband, and begged and prayed of him to send you back to her!"

"What?" almost gasped Paul; "boy, are you beside yourself?"

"You don't take it so cool as you did!" said Mr. Dudley; "it's just as I say, the game's up! You very nearly committed bigamy, but you're stopped in time. Your wife she told the whole story to Sir John Fortescue, and he cabled to Mr. White to take Miss Carew away from London, and protect her from you at any cost."

Dead silence. Paul was too amazed to speak. In his wildest dreams of George White's malice he had never imagined such a thing as this. He was certain in his own mind the story told to John Dudley was a hoax. It was utterly impossible such a story could have been told to Sir John, and, even more so, that he would believe it.

The cablegram and its contents were an invention pure and simple, but they had effectually done their work in giving the millionaire a pretext to hide Ivy from her lover. She was too pure and true to credit the slander, but if she believed the cablegram was from her uncle, however deceived she thought Sir John, she might consent to refrain from seeing her lover until the next Australian mail was in.

Paul felt terribly downcast as he thought over matters. He knew so few people in England. None except Mr. Griffiths, whose acquaintance with him dated many years back. He was conscious of his own innocence of this bogus charge; but he was far from certain how to prove its falseness. And was not the attack a crafty one—almost as though Mr. White had foreseen the young man's intention to persuade Ivy into a secret marriage; and, foreseeing it brought forward an accusation which would make any girl in the world, however trustful in her lover, yet feel uneasy if he proposed to her a runaway wedding.

John Dudley was very dull, but he was honest, and so perhaps he recognised honesty in others.

Paul was still lost in thought when the youth stepped off his high stool, and coming forward put out a very ink-stained hand.

"I'm sure there's a mistake somewhere, Mr. Beresford," he said, awkwardly. "I'd been thinking uncommonly hard things of you, but I seem to know now you never did it!"

"As Heaven is my witness, Dudley, I never did! I never spoke a word of love. I never plighted my troth, to any woman until I gave both love and troth to Ivy Carew; and were she a penniless waif, instead of a counted heiress, it would still be the dearest wish of my heart to call her wife."

"Bravo," said John, applaudingly. "Mr. Beresford, I can't give you the address because I've promised not to, but the governor will be here at ten o'clock on Monday, and if you come then I'll manage that you see him."

It was kindly meant, but that was Friday afternoon. Paul groaned as he thought of the delay.

"I'll not ask you to betray your master's secrets, my boy; but you'll just answer me a question or two that can't hurt him. Have you seen Miss Carew lately?"

"I saw her on Monday. I had to go up to Coningsby-street with some letters."

"And do you think she knows? I mean, have they told her this vile slander about me?"

John Dudley considered a moment.

"I should say not," he replied cautiously.

"She was writing a letter to Australia, and she didn't seem to know what to say; I had to wait an hour, and I don't think she wrote six lines. Now if she'd heard of the cablegram she'd have had only too much to write about. Besides—"

It dawned on Paul that John Dudley was not quite such a fool as he looked; then he caught at the last word.

"Besides what? Speak out, my boy, if you've any pity."

"You won't like to hear it, that's why I stopped," said John; "but the fact is, Miss Carew's ill, and as the doctor's orders were she was to be kept cheerful and quite free from worry, it stands to reason they'll never tell her."

Paul Beresford's face had grown white as death; he grasped at the office-table for support.

"Ill!"

"She's been ailing this long time," admitted the clerk. "she caught a cold at Christmas, and she never seemed right since. Mr. White makes an awful fuss about her, and Mrs. Austin seems as if she can't do enough for her, but yet she doesn't get better."

"Why was I not written to?" demanded Paul, almost as if the poor lad before him could have had anything to do with the omission.

"You were written to," said Mr. Dudley; "at least, Miss Carew told me so. She was a very pleasant-spoken young lady, and often, when I've been to Coningsby-street, she'd give me a word or two. I asked her once if you had come back from Edinburgh, and she said Mrs. Austin had tried to persuade you to run up just for three days, but you wrote back you were too busy."

The shortness of Ivy's letters, their sad tone, their utter absence of any allusions to his return were all explained now; she had been told that he, knowing she was ill, had made answer he was too busy to come and see her. Oh! the cruelty of it all! What she must have suffered, poor gentle girl! How her loving heart must have ached at his coldness and neglect!

John Dudley watched him, and felt troubled. It was one thing to be told the young man was a perfidious monster and an intending bigamist; it was quite another to see a brave-hearted lover half beside himself with anxiety.

"Did they have a doctor?" asked Paul, slowly.

"Oh, yes; Doctor Lallington. A very great man indeed; charges three guineas a visit. He thought very favourably of the case—called it want of tone, and prescribed change of air."

"Where does he live?"

"In Harley-street."

"He might have the address!"

"I doubt it. You see, Mr. White did not make up his mind until they were actually at the station."

Beresford rose.

"It's no use my staying here. Dudley, I shall call at ten o'clock on Monday, and you must let me see White. Remember, boy, it's life or death to me."

"You shall see him," returned the clerk, whose brains seemed wonderfully sharpened by his sympathy. "Be here at half-past nine, and insist on waiting. You're so much bigger than I am that he couldn't expect me to turn you out. There's no train to bring him before ten, so if you're here first see him you must."

Paul felt a thrill of admiration for the shabby clerk, and wondered how he could ever have thought him dull. Then he left the office and drove direct to the "Security."

The manager was in—not the personage who usually acted as such, but the real head of the affair, who contented himself by spending the handsome fortune which came in, and thinking it sufficiently earned if he put in an appearance at the office once in six months.

Paul Beresford had never seen Mr. Milton; in fact, he was beginning to look on him as almost as mythical a person as "Mrs. Harris" of Dickens celebrity.

Over and over again he had heard the name of Mr. Milton; over and over again he had believed he was expected only to be disappointed, so that he had well-nigh ceased to credit his existence.

But it was a great relief to him to find the "chief" there, for he could not forget that the two people next in authority at the "Security" were personal friends of George White, and had accepted his services at the millionaire's recommendation.

In his present mood it was far pleasanter to see someone who had no connection with his foe.

Mr. Milton proved to be a tall handsome man, not far from sixty. He had only filled his present position a few years, and though he reaped a rich harvest from the peculiar rules with which the "Security" had started its career, he was not responsible for them.

He was an honest-looking, frank-hearted man, and Paul felt a sense of confidence as he shook hands with him.

"Ah, Mr. Beresford, I have heard a good deal of you. Quite an acquisition to us, they tell me. How did you like Edinburgh?"

Paul hardly knew how to begin his story. He had touched nothing since a hurried breakfast. It was now three. He was faint from excitement and exhaustion. One time he tried to speak, then he sank back in his chair, and but for Mr. Milton's kindly assistance would have fainted. The chief administered a little water, and then poured out a glass of wine and insisted on its being drunk.

I should say you had received a sudden shock, Mr. Beresford; you look like it. Now, you have served us very well in Scotland, and if there's anything I can do for you let me hear it."

Thus encouraged, Paul felt another creature.

"May I ask you one question, sir. Are you acquainted with Mr. White?"

"I am not. He is hand and glove with Cleghorn and Harris. I have met him once or twice myself, but I never took to him. We pass the time of day in the street, that's all."

Paul unfolded his story—he made it as brief as possible. He was engaged with her uncle's full consent to Miss Carew, who had been left for a short time under Mr. White's guardianship. The millionaire had taken the young lady away, and was keeping her hidden away from her lover.

Mr. Milton smiled.

"I will help you if I can, young man. I am getting old, but I haven't lost all interest in love affairs. Still, as I hardly know White, I don't quite see how I am to influence him."

"It is not that, sir. I want leave of absence from the office to prosecute my inquiries. I have reasons to believe that Mr. Cleghorn and Mr. Harris, being personal friends of George White, would object to anything that left me free to grapple with him."

"I am master here," said Mr. Milton, a little pompously, "and I will take care people understand that I mean to be. You have my authority to remain away as long as you think necessary; a month if you like."

"Thank you, sir."

"But you have interested me very much in your story; it reads like a novel with the third volume missing. What earthly motive do you suppose George White could have in attempting to separate you and your *Ancle*?"

"Miss Carew is a great heiress, sir; but as none of her property could come to White unless she married him, I don't see what interest he has in her future."

"Nor I."

"But he has a motive, sir, though I can-

not fathom it. Why, before either of us had ever seen her Mr. White gave me instructions to find out whether Miss Carew was engaged, and whether she had good health."

Mr. Milton looked as if a ray of light had fallen suddenly on him; and yet, though his puzzled expression vanished, it gave way to one so anxious that Paul was at a loss to understand how his last speech could have occasioned it.

The chief rang the bell, and gave an order in a low tone to the clerk, who then vanished to return presently with a large official-looking book, which he placed before Mr. Milton. The latter turned over the pages rapidly until he came to what he wanted; then he looked very keenly at Paul.

"Are you a brave man, Mr. Beresford?"

"I hope so, sir."

"I mean if a sudden fear were suggested to you—a fear so absurd that it is probably a mere freak of fancy—should you feel bound to believe it, and make yourself wretched? Or could you go to work calmly to make the dreaded result an impossibility without showing anyone what you feared?"

"I think so," said Paul, slowly. "If you have discovered any possible motive for Mr. White's conduct, and will tell it me, I should never let him know I was aware of his aim, even while I did my utmost to circumvent them."

"Good! I think you are to be trusted. What is Miss Carew's Christian name?"

"Ivy. No, stay! Her name is really Helena Dorothea, only she is never called so!"

Very, very grave grew John Milton's face.

"I don't like it," he muttered to himself. "I have said over and over again I'd have number five of our rules cancelled. I wish it had been done sooner."

Then seeming for the first time to remember Paul's presence, he read out slowly,—

"December 18th. Policy of fifty thousand pounds on the life of Helena Dorothea Carew, minor, now under the guardianship of George White, of Coningsby-street. Insurer, the said George White."

Paul looked at his companion breathlessly.

"What does it mean?" for his brain seemed going round and round.

He could not realise the import of what he heard.

"It means," said Milton, simply, "that Mr. White has insured Miss Carew a life for fifty thousand pounds. Come, Mr. Beresford, remember your promise. We may suspect foul play, but we must keep our fears to ourselves. White may be hard up—I have often suspected he was not so rich as people make out; but murder is a very risky thing, and I don't think he'd try his hand at it."

Paul was incapable of speech.

"Remember, Miss Carew is young, and in the best of health; he could not make away with her without drawing suspicion on himself, and, besides, I confess I never fancied the man. But we've no right to set him down as a murderer without any proof."

"I am certain of it," came from Paul's white lips. "His clerk confessed to me to-day she had been ailing for weeks, and no one knew exactly what was the matter with her. He has hidden her from me, and is doing her to death slowly and imperceptibly."

Mr. Milton looked bewildered.

"Most men would laugh at you, sir. I can't; but I assure you, you take too serious a view of the case."

"Too serious when he has fifty thousand pounds to gain by her death—and he is, you admit, hard up!"

"But he was anxious about her health long before he insured her life. He must have had an interest in her before."

Paul shrugged his shoulders.

"I can't stop to search for his other motives. This one is sufficient. He is a man who loves money beyond aught else, and my darling's death would give him fifty thousand pounds."

"Be careful! Breathe but a word of this

to anyone in White's interests, and he will prosecute you for defamation of character. If you want to defeat him, use his own weapons—caution and craft. Just remember he has law on his side. Miss Carew is a minor, and under his guardianship. If you want to rescue her from his clutches you must be wary."

"I should like to get a warrant for his arrest!"

"What on?"

"Attempted murder!"

Milton laughed.

"Because Miss Carew has a cold! Oh! young man, how rash you are! He would bring forward proofs that he had consulted an eminent doctor, and was carrying out his instructions. You would be asked to sustain your accusation, and would have to own it was just a lover's fear."

"But what am I to do?"

"Come home and dine with me. It's no use starving yourself. If you want to help Miss Carew you'll need all your strength. You can do nothing until you have found out where White has hidden your fiancée. You say you are to see him on Monday!"

"But this is only Friday."

Milton was not a hard man. He pitied the poor young man heartily.

"I'll call round at the office to-morrow, and see if they'll give me the address, but I doubt it. I don't think White fancies me any more than I do him. Anyhow, you'd better come home and dine with me. It may be of use to you."

"I am sure your advice will help me!" said Paul, gratefully; "and there are a great many things about the case I have not told you yet."

"You shall tell me after dinner, but it is my son-in-law I expect who will be your best help; he is one of the cleverest men going—a doctor by profession, but I really think he's quick at anything. He has been in the East for a good many years; there he married my little girl, and came home to practise as a consulting physician. I'm a sad wanderer myself, but when I am in England I pitch my tent with Mary and her husband. I don't believe I could love a son of my own better than I do Marcus Ward."

Times had changed, indeed, with our old acquaintance since the days when he lived in Primrose-street, and found it a hard struggle to both ends meet. Fortune may have been tardy in smiling on him, but she smiled with no half measure at last. Mark was barely forty, and his name was known as a physician of no mean fame. He made his thousands easily, kept a carriage for his wife, and surrounded his pretty children with every comfort.

Mrs. Ward, erst Mary Milton, was a charming woman of twenty-nine, over head and ears in love with her husband, although their eldest child was nearly ten. All London could not have produced a home more replete with family love and honest domestic happiness; and yet, in spite of his success and triumphs, there was nothing hard or pretentious about Marcus Ward. He was as attentive to the gratis patients who flocked to him two mornings a week before eleven as to a Duchess in her carriage. Perhaps it was the memory of those bygone days which made him so pitiful and kind to the poor.

Mr. Milton introduced his protégé as a young friend in great perplexity. "I want you to talk to him after dinner, Mark, and I've told him Molly won't mind his frock coat."

Mrs. Ward smiled, and assured Paul they were the most unceremonious people in the world; then with true tact she avoided all reference to his unexpected arrival or to his evidently anxious state, and only showed herself conscious his visit was no ordinary one by saying to her husband when she left the dining-room, "There is a nice fire in the library; I shall send you coffee in there."

"You had better tell your own story," said Mr. Milton, when the three men were seated

comfortably in the library. "I'll answer for Mark; he'll help you if anyone can."

Dr. Ward smiled pleasantly.

"My father-in-law takes rather too high a view of my powers, but I assure you I will do my best. You can't need my aid professionally, for though you look troubled I can see that, physically, you are quite independent of doctors and their remedies."

Paul told his story very simply. He went far more into detail than he had done at the "Security office," mentioned the supposed cablegram, and his own alleged refusal to come from Edinburgh.

"The cablegram is easily settled," returned Mark, promptly. "Cable out to Sir John to know if he sent it. Not that I advise such a course, as it would make him fearfully uneasy, and it seems cruel to arouse the anxiety of a relative at the Antipodes as to Miss Carew's safety. Hold the card in your hand, but don't play it. If White throws the cablegram in your teeth, tell him you'll wire to Sir John; see how he takes it."

"You've a wonderful head, Mark!" said Mr. Milton, approvingly.

Mark smiled.

"I wish I could dispose of the rest of the case as easily as the cablegram. Mr. Beresford, there are links wanting. I am certain this George White must have known more of the Carew family than you seem to think."

"He took a house of Sir John's near Starham for the summer."

Dr. Ward started.

"You surely don't mean Sir John Fortescue! I never caught the surname before?"

"Yes."

Sir John Fortescue! Why I know him when I was Dr. Daniels' assistant. Hugh Ainslie and I used to think him our beau ideal of a country gentleman."

"Is it possible you know Mr. Ainslie?"

"He was curate at Starham when I was there; but, remember, though I lived in the place three years, I left the place when I was twenty-four, and have never seen it since."

"Mr. Ainslie is there now. He is Miss Carew's godfather."

"And Miss Carew is Sir John's niece. Was there not some mystery about her parents? It's so long ago I can't remember; but I think the mother quarrelled with her family."

"There was an estrangement. Dr. Ward, did you ever see Miss Carew?"

"Never. She had left Starham before my time. But, Mr. Beresford, I have such pleasant memories of Sir John Fortescue and his wife that I assure you I would do my utmost for their sakes to aid you."

"I wonder Mr. Ainslie has never been to see you, Mark," said Mr. Milton. "I don't like to hear of lapsed friendships."

"Ours lapsed through a singular cause. When I came to London fifteen years ago I meant to make my fortune, but, instead, I nearly starved. After months of disappointment I was called out to a case which caused me at once the deepest interest and the cruellest remorse. My patient was young and beautiful, and there was a strange mystery in her life. I always felt if I could gain her confidence I could save her. She mentioned once that she had lived in Starham—had been married there; and I wrote to Ainslie to see if he could aid me in tracing her relations."

"He sent me for answer I must be mistaken. There was no entry in the register of the marriage of Dora Gresham, and he had never heard the name. I was very young, and I had a vivid interest in my lovely patient. She had a husband I could not like, although he seemed devoted to her, and she herself evidently cared for nothing in the world but her little child."

"She trusted me so far that I witnessed her will, and was allowed to take charge of a letter for her sister, and another for her daughter. At that time I saw no cause to apprehend danger, but her illness was very lingering and

and I suggested a second opinion. The husband agreed at once."

"The day and hour were fixed for the great physician's visit, when, the night before, I was summoned in hot haste. A change for the worse had set in. I made the utmost speed, but I arrived to find Mrs. Gresham a lifeless corpse."

"As I stood and looked at her cold, white features," said Dr. Ward, with strong emotion; "the truth dawned on me. I knew why her illness had foiled my best efforts; why the suggestion of a second opinion was followed by her death. An older and more experienced doctor would have recognised the presence of digitalis—a poison, I suppose, more subtle and uncertain in its effects than any other. Dora Gresham—or as she signed her name the only time I saw it written, Helen Dorothea Gresham—had been cruelly done to death by small but repeated doses of poison under my very eyes."

Paul started to his feet.

"You said she had a child—a child who was to be sent to her sister's care. Did you hear her name?"

"I did. It was so quaint I have never forgotten it—Ivy."

Beresford's voice was broken with emotion. "I see it all!" he cried. "My darling Ivy, or, as the law would term her, Helena Dorothea Carew, is the little child whose mother your skill could not save. I knew that Mrs. Carew married again, and that she died in London. Dr. Ward, should you recognise Mr. Gresham?"

"Unquestionably."

"Then get a glimpse of George White, the millionaire, and if you can see through his disguise tell me if the man who did the mother so cruelly to death fourteen years ago is not one and the same with the wretch who is now striving to make away with his dead wife's child!"

CHAPTER IX.

SIR JOHN FORTESCUE often said gratefully he had known but little trouble. Perhaps, as a result of this, or perhaps from his natural disposition, he did not bear doubt or uneasiness at all well, and Giles Brandon found him in a most desponding companion as they drove together to the place where John Foster kept his small store, and the ancient Sandy acted as nursery-maid, and otherwise made himself generally useful.

"I shall never get over it!" said poor Sir John, sadly. "To think of the pride I have taken in Southlands—the improvements I have made there—and now that it should pass to such a creature as this disreputable old vagabond!"

"Gently!" remonstrated Brandon. "I'm afraid old Sandy is a vagabond, pure and simple, but his son is really an industrious sort of man, and the boy you saw just now at Mortimer's might be made something of."

Sir John groaned.

"Think of his freckles!"

Giles Brandon thought these blemishes by no means the worst feature of the young gentleman in question; but he brought Sir John back preemptorily to the business in hand by the startling inquiry,—

"What do you mean to do when you see Mr. Foster? Shall you introduce yourself at once, and demand whether he wrote the letter which brought you here?"

Sir John looked staggered.

"I don't know."

"You must be very careful not to give the old man the slightest hint that you believe in his claim."

"I think you'd manage it best," returned Sir John, it must be confessed rather helplessly. "You see, I've never been used to business."

The store was reached at last. It rejoiced in the name of the "Red Boot," a scarlet

Wellington being emblazoned on a big sign-board, which bobbed to and fro outside with every gust of wind.

As to the interior of the store, it would be hard to say what it did *not* contain—a little of most things, from bedsteads to paraffin oil—an all-pervading smell of the latter, and a general dirtiness perceptible to sight and touch; but what struck the visitors most was the woman who stood in the background, and was evidently the mistress of the "Red Boot."

She was young still—a good bit under forty; but hard work and the cares of a large family made her look much more, and the trials of of workaday life, instead of making her fade and pine, had apparently had just the contrary effect.

Mrs. Foster gave you the impression of a flower (to be polite) hopelessly full blown. Her dress simply looked bursting at every seam, and her hands were so fat and podgy that you marvelled her wedding-ring didn't snap in twain with the effort of encircling her finger, where it looked—to speak metaphorically—uncommonly like a very tiny, narrow valley of gold between two overhanging mountains of flesh.

She wore a large-patterned print gown, and her hair, of a whitey-brown shade, was cut short to save trouble, a style which did not suit her massive, coarse features.

There was nothing vicious or evil about Mrs. Foster's appearance; but she was not, it must be confessed, the sort of woman a gentleman of ancient lineage would like to contemplate as the future mistress of his estate—the wife of his heir.

Mrs. Foster had an eye to business.

"And what can we do for you to-day?" she asked, briskly. "There's a fine lot of fruit fresh in this morning, and a prime selection of groceries and dried goods fresh from the old country. While, if it's anything for your good ladies, we've a box of fall veils just come from Paris, and not opened."

Sir John strove to fancy his "good lady" wearing anything that had come out of such a place; but Brandon was quite equal to talking to the proprietress of the "Red Boot."

"Good-morning, Mrs. Foster. Don't you remember me? Your boy's with my son-in-law, Mortimer, you know!"

Mrs. Foster's manner changed: it became almost confidential.

"To be sure. Mr. Brandon, of course. I did hear you'd come back from England. And how is Mrs. Mortimer and the baby? Ah! I reckon she's real proud of it. It's always the way with number one; whereas when it comes to number nine you almost forget to be proud in thinking of the extra mouths to feed."

"Very true. My daughter is quite well, thank you. The fact is, Mrs. Foster, we've not come shopping this morning. This gentleman," and he laid his hand on Sir John's arm, "is very anxious to see your father-in-law."

"The old 'un?" exclaimed Mrs. Foster, irreverently. "Why, then, Mr. Brandon, I do believe he's got second sight, or whatever you call it. These last four days he's not stirred from the house, because he's been so sure someone 'ld come. I thought it was just a fad—when folks get to seventy they're full of fancies. I'll call him."

There entered a man so old and wizened-looking that it was very difficult to judge what he had been like. His hair was white as snow, and being worn long on his neck might have given him a venerable aspect but for a small red cap stuck on the back of his head, which reminded one dimly of a clown.

His clothes were threadbare, but had once been good, and were evidently relics of better days.

To Sir John's intense surprise he wore a signet ring on his little finger, and in spite of his shabby attire and mean surroundings, he moved and spoke as a gentleman, receiving his

visitors with perfect ease, and greeting them on terms of equality.

"I had expected you," he said, with a courtly bow. "Maria Anne," to his daughter-in-law, "you see before you the head of the family, Sir John Fortescue, baronet, of Southlands, Monmouthshire, my worthy and respected kinsman."

Maria Anne looked very much as though she thought the "old 'un" a little off his head.

"He *must* have been drinking," she said to Brandon; "though I did think I'd looked everything up; but there, he's that crafty there's no standing him. Don't you mind a word he says, sir, nor your friend neither; he's quite harmless, but he's just daft on that name. He'll sit and talk of the Fortescues for hours, and now he's managed to persuade himself he's one himself. Here, grand-dad," she said, coming close to the old man, and shouting into his ears, "your brains are gone wool-gathering, I think. This gentleman is pa to Alick's master, and he's brought a friend from England."

Sandy nodded his head emphatically.

"Just so. Be easy, Maria Anne, be easy! You'll die, 'my lady,' and your nine children will live in luxury. We are the descendants of Alexander Fortescue, and when once the breath's out of this gentleman's body we'll be richer than you've ever dreamed of."

He led the way to a small room opening from the store, doubtless thinking so important a conversation should be carried on more privately.

Maria Anne, excited either by the visions of having herself called "my lady," or the thought of her nine children revelling in luxury, left future customers of the "Red Boot" to attend on themselves, and followed the three gentlemen, her curiosity fully aroused.

"I wrote to you," said old Sandy, putting one hand affectionately on Sir John's, who, we grieve to say, not feeling cousinly, shook it off. "I saw your name in the prospectus of the Delonda gold mines. I heard that you were rich in all but children. I looked around, and beheld John and Maria Anne, with nine hungry mouths to be filled; and I felt the moment had come. I and mine should no longer languish in poverty, but should re-ascend to the sphere whence our ancestor fell."

He spoke just as though that sphere was a kind of visible platform or dais to which he and his descendants would attain by a prosaic ladder.

Sir John was dimly conscious the old man was getting the best of it when Giles Brandon interposed.

"Excuse me, Mr. Foster, but it's very easy for you to say you're Sir John's cousin; but as the matter is a very serious one, involving the disposal of a title and large property, what we require is not words, but proof."

Maria Anne looked perplexed. The matter was more serious than she had supposed. A keen-sighted, practical woman, she had always looked on old Sandy's high-flown expectations as nonsense pure and simple. Noticing Mr. Brandon's grave, impassive face, and Sir John's sad, gloomy silence, she began to think there might be something in the "old 'un's" romancing after all.

"Proof!" exclaimed Sandy, moving his cap theatrically. "And do you doubt my word?"

"Not in the least!" said Giles, more glibly than truthfully; "but you see a court of law might require something more than mere words. Besides, neither Sir John nor I are quite clear of your story, save that you claim to be descended from his great uncle, Alexander Fortescue, who emigrated to Australia more than seventy years ago."

"I am his son—his only son."

"And the proofs? Pardon me, but as you could not have been alive when Alexander Fortescue left England part of your story rests on other people's testimony, of which you must have some proof!"

(To be continued.)

A GOLDEN DESTINY.

—10—

CHAPTER I.

No. —, Grosvenor-square, was the town residence of the Earl of Danmore; and on the evening of which we write—an evening in June, when the season was at its height, and carriages were rolling along the streets, bearing their occupants to balls, theatres, and parties—Lord Danmore and his son were sitting together over their wine, engaged in conversation rather more serious than generally occupied their after-dinner attention.

The room was large and lofty, the ceiling painted in frescoes, and the walls were panelled in costly wood. Heavy velvet hangings screened the windows, and a few magnificent bronzes and world-famed pictures gave evidence of their owner's taste and love of art.

The Earl was a man of about fifty or thereabouts, tall, dark, and still handsome; while his son, younger by some five-and-twenty years, strongly resembled him, save that he was considerably fairer; and instead of having black hair and a grizzled beard, thick chestnut curls were tossed back from his forehead, and the heavy moustache shading his lips was even fairer, gleaming in the light like ruddy gold.

Harold, Lord St. Croix, was considered one of the handsomest men in London; and it was only owing to his essentially manly nature that he had not been spoiled by admiration, and the consciousness that Fortune had lavished upon him her choicest favours.

"Yes," he was saying, as he carefully peeled a peach with the silver dessert knife; "I quite agree with you that I ought to marry, and the sooner the better, I suppose. Not that I, personally, have any desire for putting my head in the matrimonial noose," he added, with a light laugh; "but when one has the title and estates to think of, one must put aside purely personal considerations."

"Certainly!" acquiesced his father. "I am glad you are so ready to meet my wishes, and not only in the matter of marrying, but in that of choosing the lady as well. Sir Trarice Leigh has been my friend from boyhood, and it has always been our mutual desire that our two families should be united by the closest of possible ties. If he had a daughter I should wish you to marry her, but, failing that, the next best thing is to marry his niece."

"Miss Seymour is very pretty," observed Lord St. Croix, in a meditative voice, cutting the peel of the peach in tiniest fragments; "or, perhaps it would be better to say she is very handsome, for 'pretty' hardly describes her accurately."

"She is not only handsome, she will inherit the whole of her uncle's estates, which are very large; and, as you know, dovetail into ours," said the Earl. "Besides, she is eminently calculated by nature to shine in society—and that is really what you want in a wife if you contemplate a political career."

There was a short pause. The ticking of the clock on the black marble mantelpiece alone broke the silence within the room; but outside could be heard the subdued hum of the great city, and the sound of carriages drawing up in front of different doors in the square.

Presently Lord St. Croix said, with a short laugh,—

"Has it not struck you as strange, sir, that in all this talk about my marriage there has been no mention made of what is usually supposed to play a primary part in such affairs—I mean love?"

"I supposed you were 'in love,' as it is called, with Ernestine Seymour," responded his father, rather stiffly. "I do not see any reason why you should not be."

"No—unless it is true that reason and love have very little to do with each other."

"You paid her a good deal of attention last

year, and gave her cause to suppose that you cared for her."

"Did I?" returned the young man, carelessly. "I suppose I did. Well, she was the belle of the season, and I really did like her and admire her very much. I daresay, in time, I shall become desperately in love with her, or if I'm not it won't matter, for liking is almost as good a foundation for matrimony as love. At any rate, I am quite willing to marry her, if it will give you so much pleasure," he added, stretching out his hand, which his father heartily grasped; and having thus arrived at a satisfactory termination to their *à-la-tête*, they both got up—the Earl to adjourn to the library, while Lord St. Croix, slipping a light overcoat over his evening dress, lighted a cigar and went out.

He had promised to attend a reception given by one of the minister's wives; but, somehow, he felt in no humour for company just then, and so he sauntered along the gaudy streets, finally turning on to the Embankment, where it was quieter, and better adapted for meditation.

Before he had proceeded far a girl's voice, slightly raised, broke on his ear, and he involuntarily stopped, struck by the exquisite sweetness of the tones. The speaker was standing a few paces off, and seemed to be trying to draw herself away from a man who had laid his hand on her arm, apparently for the purpose of detaining her.

"I tell you I do not know you, sir!" she exclaimed, and there was the faintest possible trace of a foreign accent in her voice. "I beg you will release me instantly!"

The man's reply was inaudible, but it evidently roused his companion's anger, for she strove with all her might to disengage herself from him, at the same time calling out,—
"Help! Help!"

Lord St. Croix had never been in a street row in his life, but he was not the sort of man to disregard a woman's cry for aid; and almost before the appeal had died on the young girl's lips, he was by her side.

He could see her companion now, a dark, rather handsome man, who looked as if he had drunk more than was good for him, and who, in spite of her cries, still kept hold of the girl's arm.

"Loose that lady immediately!" said Harold, imperatively. "If you do not I shall—"

"What?" insolently asked the other, without obeying the mandate. "You will mind your own business I should think, if you know what wisdom is."

"You are right, and my business will be to knock you down," the young man responded, promptly. "I give you one more chance, but if you don't take your hand away at once I shall put my threat in execution."

A muttered curse was the only reply, and the next minute the ruffian was sent spinning across the pavement, while the young Viscount, turning to the girl, said rapidly,—

"You had better get away from here—there will be a crowd directly, and it will be pleasant for neither of us. Come!"

She followed him obediently, and it was not until they had proceeded some distance that he stopped.

"I think you will be all right now," he said, kindly. "At all events, you may feel assured that cowardly bully will not annoy you again."

For the first time he looked at her, and saw her face, and as he did so, he could not repress a slight exclamation of astonishment, for assuredly his eyes had never before rested on anything so lovely.

She was very young—a mere child, in fact—being hardly more than eighteen, and in her large blue eyes was an expression of most childish innocence.

She was dressed very plainly in black, and from under her little hood a cloud of yellow hair had escaped, and lay on her shoulders like a golden aureole.

There was something peculiar in her dress too. Lord St. Croix could not have said what

it was if he had been asked, but it gave her a half foreign air, which was increased by her accent when she spoke.

"You have been very kind to me, sir," she said, rather tremulously, "and I thank you with all my heart."

Then she took his hand, and with the perfectly natural innocence of a child, raised it to her lips, at the same time lifting her grateful blue eyes to his.

Lord St. Croix felt slightly embarrassed, but at the same time deeply interested. Who was this beautiful girl, with her refined manner, and gentle voice? What brought her wandering about the London streets at this hour?

"I had lost my way and was looking at the river when that man spoke to me," she went on, after a moment's pause. "Can you tell me the route to Charing-cross?"

He directed her, but still she hesitated, and he fancied it was because she was afraid of being annoyed on the way. With this idea, he said,—

"Should you like me to see you home? I could at least protect you from interference."

"Oh, no, no!" hurriedly. Then she added, with a melancholy smile, "I am not going home yet. But I am in trouble, and your face looks so kind that I feel I can tell you of it, and perhaps you may be able to help me. I am going a journey, and I find I have not enough money to pay for my railway fare."

She blushed all over her fair face as she made the confession, and Lord St. Croix, putting his hand into his pocket drew forth five or six sovereigns and some loose silver.

She made a quick gesture of negation, and drew her slim form up with a movement of hauteur that would have become a duchess.

"I do not want to borrow or beg," she said, her voice instinct with pride. "I have an ornament here that I believe is worth a good deal of money, and I intended selling it. Perhaps you can tell me of a shop where they buy such things."

She drew a little case from her bosom, and opened it. It contained a gold pendant in the form of a maltese cross, and it was set with jewels which glittered in the light of the lamp.

Probably it may have been worth from five to six pounds, but a jeweller would not have advanced half the sum upon it.

She, ignorant of the value of such things, had no doubt over-estimated its worth.

"How much money do you want?" asked the young Viscount.

"Four pounds will be enough, I think."

"Let me give you five, and then you can redeem your locket when you like."

"Do you mean," she exclaimed, joyously, "that if I send to you, and return the money you lend me, I can have the pendant back?"

"Certainly!"

"Oh! thank you—thank you! But you must tell me your name, and where you live."

It was his turn to hesitate now. For all his chivalrous and romantic tendencies, Lord St. Croix was still a man of the world, and the idea of giving his address to a perfect stranger whom he had met in such a casual manner did not particularly commend itself to him. Was what she said true, or was she an impostor, trading on his credulity?

One glance into her eyes—clear, fearless mirrors of a pure soul—set all his doubts at rest, even made him ashamed of them, and without more ado he took out a card and gave it to her.

She read it with unfeigned curiosity, and then looked at him with a new interest.

"Harold St. Croix! What a pretty name."

It should be mentioned that the card he had selected had his name, but not his title, printed upon it.

"I shall not forget it, or your kindness, and some day, perhaps—"

She broke off abruptly, as if hardly certain of the termination she had intended giving her sentence, and after wrapping the sovereigns he had given her in a piece of paper put them carefully away in her pocket. Then she held out her hand.

"Good-bye."

"Good-bye," he said, holding the little slender fingers in his own. "Are you sure you would not like me to see you safely to your destination?"

"Sure—quite sure, thank you all the same. I shall write to you sometimes, and send you your money. In the meanwhile, take care of my locket."

A moment later and her form had disappeared beyond the radius of light cast by the lamp, and Lord St. Croix stood alone, wondering at the adventure which had just befallen him.

He had had more experience of life than most men of his age, but never before had such an one happened to him, and perhaps the spice of romance surrounding it made him attach to it a greater importance than he would otherwise have done. That the girl was a lady he had no shadow of doubt, and once he thought he had been wrong in not insisting on seeing her safely back with her friends. Still, he could hardly have forced his escort upon her, for there had been a certain dignity in her refusal, against which it was hard to rebel.

Whoever she was she was a mystery, and, more than that, a mystery Harold would have liked to see solved.

He went towards the parapet, and gazed at the darkly flowing river, with the lamps on either side throwing long wavy, reflections on its blackness; and as he gazed there rose before him that sweet girlish face, with the blue eyes looking wistfully into his, and that scattered cloud of golden hair lying over the slim shoulders.

He turned round with a slight movement of impatience.

"Pshaw!" he exclaimed, with a laugh, "I am as bad as the most romantic boy of seventeen. I don't suppose I shall ever see the girl again, and even if I do, what will it avail? In future I belong to Ermentrude, and it won't do for my thoughts to run after strange goddesses."

But he did not go to the reception which he had promised to attend; neither did he, as usual, drop into his club. Instead of this, he went home, and stayed by himself in his own "den," smoking until the small hours of the morning.

CHAPTER II.

WOODLEIGH COURT, the residence of Sir Trarice Leigh, was a grand old pile of grey stone buildings, partly covered with ivy, and partly stained with the lovely mellow hues of moss and lichen. It had been built in the reign of Elizabeth, but much had been added and improved since then; and although the outside bore upon it the marks of having withstood the storms of many winters, and the suns of many summers, the interior was replete with every comfort that modern ideas had invented, and that money was able to procure.

Sir Trarice Leigh was a rich man, and never having squandered his fortune in gambling or on the turf, could afford to indulge his most extravagant caprices.

The rooms of his niece and heiress, Ermentrude Seymour, were especially sumptuous, as he had furnished them on purpose for her. There was a suite consisting of bed, dressing-room, bath-room, and boudoir, and all were panelled in white wood, beautifully carved, while the curtains and upholstery were of the most delicate blue and silver brocade.

The boudoir looked a nest fit for any princess in the land, with its swinging silver lamp, its choice water colours, its brackets and statuettes, and the hundred and one pretty nick-nacks with which girls love to surround themselves.

Ermentrude herself was one of the choicest ornaments of the house. Look at her as she leans back on the softly luxurious couch, clad in a crimson plush tea-gown, with cascades of costly lace about it, and a knot of yellow roses fastened at the throat! Look at

the dark full eyes, above which delicate black brows arch themselves; at the full, pointing, scarlet mouth, and the ripples of blue-black hair waving away from the low forehead, and confess that she might sit to a painter as a model for Cleopatra, or some Moorish princess equally beautiful!

But Moorish princesses are as liable to the annoyances and vexations of common humanity as other people, and at this particular moment Ermentrude looks anything but amiable. Her brows are knitted together in a frown, and her small foot in its crimson silk stocking and silver buckled shoe taps on the floor in very decided impatience.

"It's all very fine to talk of his being rich and titled, but, after all, there's a good deal to be said in favour of having a husband in love with you, and that Lord St. Croix is certainly not," she said to her mother—a stately looking dark woman sitting opposite.

Mrs. Seymour's lip curled with some scorn. "My dear child, you are too romantic by far," she returned, placidly, going on with her crowd embroidery as she spoke. "When you have lived as long as I have you'll find love is a very small item in life."

"Perhaps; but how about the years that intervene before I am your age?"

"Lord St. Croix is everything that could be wished as a *parti*," went on Mrs. Seymour, choosing to ignore the last question; "and, besides, he is the man your uncle wishes you to marry, so there is no more to be said on the subject."

"Then I suppose that you think girls ought to marry to please their relatives, not themselves?"

"Certainly, in some cases—your own, for example. Listen to me, Ermentrude," Mrs. Seymour went on impressively, laying down her work, and looking her daughter straight in the face. "You are getting a little too independent and self-willed, and therefore it is my duty to recall you to a sense of what your position really is. You have been brought up as your uncle's heiress, your caprices gratified, your wishes consulted in every possible way; but, remember, you have no real claim on Sir Travice Leigh, and if he were to die to-morrow without a will the law would give you simply nothing at all."

"I am his niece," said the girl, sullenly.

"You are his niece, the daughter of his half brother. It is true he intends making you his heiress, and you are fated for a golden destiny if only you play your cards properly; but he is a man who will not bear contradiction, and he has set his heart on your marrying the son of his old friend. If you thwart him it will be the worse for you."

Ermentrude was silent, for she saw quite clearly the force of her mother's reasoning, and acknowledged its wisdom. The fact was that she had grown so accustomed to looking upon herself as Sir Travice Leigh's heiress that she seldom paused to consider whether the claim she had upon him was a legal one, or one that he could repudiate at any moment if he were so disposed. It was not pleasant to be reminded of the disagreeable fact that her future wealth depended entirely upon his caprice.

"Has my uncle made a will?" she asked, presently.

"No; I am sorry to say he has not."

"Why doesn't he do it, then?"

"Why do so many men die intestate?" retorted her mother. "Simply because they have an intense repugnance to looking forward to their own death. Sir Travice, though a strong-minded man in other respects, is foolish in this one."

"Have you ever tried to persuade him, mother?"

"Downs of times, and he has promised to do it, but has put it off and put it off until the present moment. I dare not say too much, especially as the last time I mentioned the subject he said he should make your future all right in your marriage settlements."

"Does he mean he will settle all his fortune upon me?"

"I expect so—at his death, that is to say. Why!" Mrs. Seymour continued, "you are certainly one of the most lucky girls in the whole world! Young, handsome, rich in prospects, and about to be married to a—"

"Viscount!" put in her daughter, with a slight sneer. "After all, it is not so very much, when I might have aspired to a duke if I had not been hampered with my uncle's wishes."

"Don't be a fool!" retorted Mrs. Seymour, sharply. "I suppose you have heard of people who have dropped the substance while looking at the shadow. I hope you don't intend to emulate their achievements. Lord St. Croix will be here this evening, and you had better make up your mind to receive him with your very sweetest smile."

"And in my very prettiest dress! You may be sure I shall follow your counsel in both instances; for I have not the faintest intention of letting him slip through my fingers—something to fall back upon in case my uncle does not make a will."

Mrs. Seymour smiled grimly.

"There's many a true word spoken in jest."

"By the way, what time is Lord St. Croix coming?"

"He will be here about half-past eight, I expect. Dinner has been put off until nine in honour of his arrival."

At this moment there came a hasty knock at the door, which was immediately after opened to admit a short, stout woman of middle age, dressed in the garb of a sort of upper servant.

"Can I speak with you a minute, ma'am?" she said, addressing Mrs. Seymour.

"Certainly;" then in a tone of alarm, as she saw the woman's anxious expression, "what is the matter, Sumner? Has anything happened?"

"Yes—something very unfortunate—about as bad as it can be," the maid answered, shortly. She looked at Ermentrude, who was gazing at her with undisguised curiosity; and then, crossing over to her mistress, whispered something in her ear which caused Mrs. Seymour's face to turn deathly pale.

She half rose from her seat, and threw out her hands with a gesture that looked like appeal.

"It is not true—it cannot be true, Sumner!"

"It is quite true, ma'am, and the sooner you gather your wits together, and think over what had best be done, the better," grimly replied Sumner.

"What is the matter, mother?" asked Ermentrude, looking from one to the other suspiciously.

"Nothing—nothing that can be told to you," was the short reply, and, while speaking, Mrs. Seymour left the room, followed by her maid.

Ermentrude knitted her brows together in a puzzled manner after they had left, wondering what had happened to disturb her mother thus; but although she was curious she was far too selfish to waste her time in thinking over matters that did not actually concern her, and a few minutes later she had gone to her dressing-room, and was turning over the contents of her wardrobe to see what dress she should select to wear for dinner that day—a most important consideration—seeing that she was always desirous of looking her best, and divided her time pretty equally between trying on garments, and going out.

It had been a bitter disappointment to her that Sir Travice Leigh had resolved not to go to London for the season, alleging as an excuse his own health, although Ermentrude more than suspected that this was not the true reason, but that he wanted to keep her in the country so as to make sure she should marry no one save the husband he had already destined for her.

Half-an-hour afterwards the young heiress heard the sound of carriage wheels, and, looking out, was just in time to see her mother step into the brougham, followed by Sumner.

"I wonder where they are going," thought the girl, watching the carriage from behind

her curtains as it drove away. "It is very strange mother should go out to-day when the whole house is more or less turned topsy-turvy on account of Lord St. Croix's arrival, and, stranger, still that she should take Sumner with her! I believe there is some secret between them, which no one else shares, for the woman behaves more like an equal than a servant, and mother nearly always gives way to her."

With this conclusion she turned to her dresses again.

CHAPTER III.

THE day after Lord St. Croix's mysterious adventure he started for W-shire, in which county Sir Travice Leigh's estates were situated. The journey by rail was not of more than four hours' duration; but as Woodleigh Court was some distance from a station, there were some four or five miles to travel by road after he left the train.

A carriage was at the station to meet him, and a dog-cart for his luggage. He got into the former, lit a cigar, and as he was borne along through the June afternoon, wondered what had become of the girl whose little locket was placed carefully away in his pocket, and whether he should ever see her again.

Out of the clouds of cigar smoke floated the fair face, with its wistful blue eyes and scarlet mouth—its tender troubled expression.

With an effort Harold brought back his thoughts to the present, and looked around him. On either side were broad stretches of pasture land. In the distance farmsteads were dotted about here and there, and yet farther away the blue hills rose and kissed the clouds.

All these fair lands belonged to Sir Travice Leigh, and would at his death pass to his niece, Ermentrude.

By-and-by the carriage passed from the open ground, along a road on either side of which were dense plantations, where game was carefully preserved—for the Baronet was a keen and eager sportsman, and yearly assembled a large party at the Court for the first of September.

"What glorious preserves!" muttered Lord St. Croix, leaning out of the open carriage, the better to look at the wood.

It was now about eight o'clock, and just growing dusk. In the west the sun had set, and long lines of gold and burning crimson told where he had gone down.

Over all a great stillness reigned, broken only by the low trill of a thrush, now and again, or the shrill, startled cry of some other bird, flying low across the path.

Suddenly, and with preternaturally startling effect, another sound broke on the silence—the sharp, cracking report of firearms, and a bullet whizzed close against Harold's cheek, lodging itself in the lining of the carriage.

Instantly the coachman pulled up his frightened horses, which had been alarmed at the report, and were now kicking and struggling frantically.

It took him some time to quiet them, and, meanwhile, Lord St. Croix sprang to the ground, and looked round to see if there were any signs of his assailant—for that the bullet had been intended for him he had not the slightest doubt.

"Stay," he said to the coachman, whose name was Jarvis, and who was an old family servant of Sir Travice's, "I will go in the wood, and see if I can find the man who fired the pistol."

"Do you think it was done on purpose, my lord?" asked Jarvis, who was much paler and more frightened than Harold himself.

"Certainly; and the marksman was a very good one too. If it had not happened that I swerved round to the right just at that minute I should have been a dead man by this, for the bullet would inevitably have passed through my brain."

"Perhaps it was poachers?" suggested Jarvis.

"Poachers don't carry on their depredations thus early in the evening; and, besides, as there was no danger of my interrupting them, they assuredly would not have thought it worth their while to risk detection by firing off their weapons. No, we must look for the would-be assassin in another direction."

He got into the wood by leaping over the low fence that divided it from the road, and which, while it afforded an excellent place for concealment, would still allow any person crouched in the shadow a full view of the road, for there were many gaps, and also many places where the undergrowth was scanty.

In one spot the turf was trampled down rather more than in other places, and here Lord St. Croix decided the assassin must have knelt.

Whether this was or not cannot be said, but in any case the man had got close away, and without leaving any signs by which a clue to his whereabouts might be gathered. Harold, convinced of the uselessness of any further search, left the wood, and, returning to the carriage, carefully examined the bullet which had lodged in the evening, and which he put away in his pocket-book.

Then, directing the alarmed coachman to drive on, he composed himself in his old corner, and kept a sharp look-out during the entire route, so as to guard against any second attempt that might be made.

His precautions were unnecessary, however, for the rest of the drive was accomplished without interruption, and on arriving at the Court, Lord St. Croix found his host standing on the steps ready to welcome him.

The Baronet was a man of about fifty, but looking older than that by reason of his white hair, which lent him an appearance almost venerable.

He had been handsome, but sorrow, even more than time, had left its marks on his face, without, however, quenching in the least degree the firmly determined expression, which was, perhaps, the most striking characteristic of his face.

He greeted Lord St. Croix with more than ordinary welcome, and it was clear that he entertained a great affection for the son of his old friend.

"You are rather later than we expected," he observed, leading the way into a lofty gothic-roofed hall, on the walls of which were arranged stage and fox's heads, and various implements of the chase, both English and foreign, while the marble floor was partially covered with the skins of various animals shot by the Baronet.

"Yes, a slight accident detained me," Harold returned, with careless indifference.

"An accident?"

"Nothing much. I will tell you about it after dinner. By-the-way, I fear I have kept you waiting?"

"We put off our dinner-hour until nine o'clock in expectation of your coming," evasively answered the Baronet. "However, I will not keep you here any longer, you must be quite starved."

"Not so bad as that," laughed the young man, as he ascended the broad, shallow oak stairs, "but, all the same, dinner will be very welcome."

He was not long dressing, and when he entered the drawing-room, found it already tenanted by the Baronet, his niece and her mother, and a second gentleman, who was introduced as—

"Mr. Villari."

As he heard his name, Harold recollected that he had been staying at Woodleigh Court for the last six months in the capacity of secretary to Sir Travice, who thought very highly of his talents. He was a particularly good-looking young man, with dreamy Italian eyes, and the face of an artist or a poet. As a matter of fact, he was half-Italian, having been born of an English mother and Roman

Ermentrude looked radiantly handsome. She wore a dress of pale lemon silk, half smothered in rich lace; emeralds gleamed on her white neck and rounded arms, and a jewelled bird, whose plumage quivered with her every movement, sending out flashes of green and red light, nestled in her hair.

She was taken down to dinner by Lord St. Croix, who told himself that he was surely a man to be envied in having the prospect of so beautiful a bride.

A coquette to her finger-tips, Ermentrude made every effort to fascinate the young Viscount, and kept up an animated conversation with him during the whole of dinner—casting every now and then glances on the secretary, who, to do him justice, paid very little attention to her.

"I did so wish to be in London this season," she said, sighing, as she adjusted the bracelet on her round, white wrist. "It seems such a pity to stagnate here in the country, while all the gaiety of the season is in progress."

"And yet the country, at this time of year, is far lovelier than town."

"Perhaps so, but I don't care a bit for scenery, and I like crowds of people."

"Do you mean to say, that, brought up in the country as you have been, you care nothing for flowers, and lovely landscapes, and all the other beauties of sylvan life?"

"It is true," she avowed, candidly. "I prefer seeing the flowers blossoming in pots in a crowded ball-room, and I like the sound of Odeon and Theatre's band ever so much better than the songs of thrushes and blackbirds. Do you call it bad taste on my part?"

"It is peculiar taste," he answered, evasively. She laughed as she lifted her champagne glass to her lips, and sipped the amber liquid with the zest of a connoisseur in wine.

"I am not romantic," she observed, lightly, "and, what is more, I don't pretend to be. I tell you outright that I should be miserable if I thought I should be condemned to spend next year at Woodleigh Court."

"There is little danger of that," he returned, in a significant tone, as his eyes met hers.

She knew his meaning, but instead of embarrassing it seemed to please her, and her brilliant eyes flashed triumphantly as she rose, and followed her mother out of the room.

Mrs. Seymour had been very quiet during dinner, and as she was usually a fluent talker, her silence seemed all the more strange.

Once or twice she had endeavoured to rouse herself from her abstraction, but it was quite clear the effort was distasteful to her, and that she was decidedly not in the mood for company.

When the gentlemen were alone, the conversation reverted to Lord St. Croix's accident, which he proceeded minutely to describe.

Sir Travice and Villari both expressed surprise, and seemed inclined to believe that the shot had been the result of an accident; but this view was distinctly negatived by the Viscount.

"Just before the shot was fired I saw a hand above the leaves," he said, "and although, if nothing had happened I might have taken no notice of the circumstance, I now feel quite convinced that that hand held the pistol which was fired with the intention of taking my life!"

"Are you sure it was a pistol, and not a gun?" asked Villari.

"Quite sure!"

"What has given you that idea?"

St. Croix smiled, and took from his pocket-book the bullet, which he handed to the questioner.

"There is not much doubt on the point with that for a guide," he observed.

"No," returned the secretary, looking grave. Then he added, after a moment's pause, "Have you any enemies who are likely to have followed you down here?"

"Not that I am aware of; indeed, to the best of my belief, I have not an enemy in the world."

Sir Travice was much disturbed about the incident, which by some process of reasoning

impossible to follow, he was inclined to blame himself for.

"I ought to have sent a close carriage to the station to meet you, and then you would have been all right," he said.

"My dear Sir Travice, pray don't concern yourself over the matter; it has neither alarmed nor disturbed me in the very least!" exclaimed the Viscount, with a light laugh. "The only thing about the whole affair that worries me is the mystery in which it is enveloped, and that I candidly confess, I should like to fathom. I would give a hundred pounds at this minute to lay my hand on the man who fired in ambush!"

"Cowardly villain!" said the secretary, warmly, "hanging would be too good for him. Shall you take any steps towards finding out who he is?"

"I shall," put in the Baronet, with decision.

"It has occurred on my estate, and I shall think it my duty to sift the matter to the bottom. To-morrow I will write to Lord Woodleigh for a detective to come down, and if the wretch is anywhere near Woodleigh Court I should think we shall be able to unearth him. At any rate, it shall not be for want of trying."

After this the three gentlemen returned to the drawing-room, where Ermentrude was seated in front of the grand piano, accompanying herself while she sang.

Lord St. Croix went over to her, and under cover of the music an incipient flirtation ensued, which consisted of compliments on his part, and a few of her most telling coquetties on hers. The Viscount knew quite well she was a coquette, and he more than suspected she was vain. It amused him to whisper flowery speeches into her willing ear, and he murmured flatteries so far-fetched that after uttering them he more than once feared she must resent being told so plainly of her charms. His fears were groundless. No fish ever rose to a bait more greedily than Ermentrude to compliments. If she could have had her will, she would have lived in an atmosphere of constant adulation, and—more than that—would never have grown tired of it!

When coffee was brought in, Lord St. Croix moved away to the side of Mrs. Seymour, and then the conversation became general.

"It is quite a long time since you were here before," remarked Mrs. Seymour, half reproachfully, to the young Viscount. "Nearly two years!"

"Is it so long? How quickly time passes! You see I have been abroad since then, and the rest of my time has been taken up in one way or the other. Do you remember the picnic we had during my last visit to Heron's Nest?"

What was there in the question to make Mrs. Seymour grow pale, and to cause the hand which held her coffee cup to tremble so greatly that a few drops of its contents were spilled on the carpet?

"Did we have a picnic at Heron's Nest?" she faltered.

"Yes. Have you forgotten?"

"I had forgotten, but I think I remember it now."

"I suppose the old place is still standing, and is still in the same half ruinous condition?"

"Nothing has been done to it in the way of repairs," she answered.

"A good thing too, so long as you do not require it for habitation. Its picturesqueness would be spoilt if you were to have the windows restored, and the walls made weather-proof. It is certainly, as it stands at present, one of the most eerie looking places I ever saw. One might well imagine it haunted by all the ghosts of the dead and gone Leighs."

"One might do something more than imagine," returned Mrs. Seymour, in a mysterious undertone.

St. Croix looked at her inquiringly.

"Do you mean that you really believe it to



["LISTEN TO ME, ERMENTRUDE," HER MOTHER SAID. "YOU ARE GETTING A LITTLE TOO INDEPENDENT AND SELF-WILLED."]

be haunted?" he said, incredulously, while a half smile played round his lips.

"I do. I am not jesting, Lord St. Croix, for I have both seen and heard things at Heron's Nest which will admit of no other interpretation than that they are supernatural."

"What class of things?" he asked, not without a suspicion of mockery in his voice.

"I do not wish to talk more on the subject; it is one which always makes me feel half-frightened. You may laugh as you like, Lord St. Croix, but I am perfectly serious in what I say."

"I will be as solemn as a judge," declared the young man, composing his features into an expression of ultra-gravity, "if you will only give me a description of the—what shall we call them—appearances?"

Mrs. Seymour hesitated, then said, in a low voice,—

"There is a legend connected with Heron's Nest, and I believe the story is a true one. One of the Leighs fell in love with and married a young girl very much below him in social position. The marriage was kept a secret from his family, and in order that it should not be suspected, he brought his bride down to Heron's Nest, which belonged to him, for as you know, it has, from time immemorial been the custom in the family for the eldest son to take possession of it on his twenty-first birthday. There the young wifed for two or three years, and at the end of that time her husband, who had ruined himself in gambling, and leading a life of general dissipation, decided to repair his damaged fortune by marrying an heiress, whose family, ignorant of the fact that he already had a wife, had proposed the alliance to him. He, therefore, came down to 'Heron's Nest' one dark night in December, and went to his wife's sitting room, which was situated in the Tower overlooking the mere. There he found her, and it is said proposed to her she should leave the country, on condition that he gave her a large sum of money. She

naturally refused, and seems to have upbraided him very bitterly for his neglect, and cruel treatment, whereupon he, maddened by her reproaches, all of which he richly deserved, took her in his arms, and flung her through the open window into the mere below."

"What a blood-curdling history!" exclaimed St. Croix, with mock horror. "And pray what became of the wicked husband afterwards?"

"He married the heiress, but was constantly haunted by the vision of his dead wife, who, he said, used to appear before him with water-weeds twined in her long hair—"

"A second edition of Ophelia," murmured the Viscount, *sotto voce*.

"And water dripping from her garments," continued Mrs. Seymour, unmindful of the interruption. "Everything was done that could be thought of to exorcise the apparition, but nothing was of any avail, and the wretched man became raving mad, in which condition he died."

"And the wife—number one I mean?"

"She still continues to haunt the 'Heron's Nest,' and it is said her voice is sometimes heard singing melancholy ditties in her Tower chamber."

"Really? The story interests me greatly. I must go to the mere, and see if the vision will appear to me."

"Lord St. Croix," said Mrs. Seymour, earnestly. "I want you to promise me not to set foot inside 'Heron's Nest.' I daresay you will laugh and think the request a foolish one, but there is an old prophecy which predicts danger for anyone connected with the family of Leigh who enters the place. You are not yet connected with the family—" she paused, and he filled in the sentence.

"But I may be some time? And you are timid on my behalf?"

"Yes."

"Do you know, Mrs. Seymour, you have very much surprised me!" he said. "I thought you were one of the most strong-minded of women,

and quite above all such weaknesses as you have just confessed."

"Which shows that you are not yet acquainted with the various inconsistencies of my sex."

"Heaven forbid that I should pretend to such a depth of wisdom!" piously. "I am now more than ever convinced that the experience of a whole lifetime would be insufficient to give one the key to the numerous complexities of feminine nature."

"Well, you will promise me, will you not?"

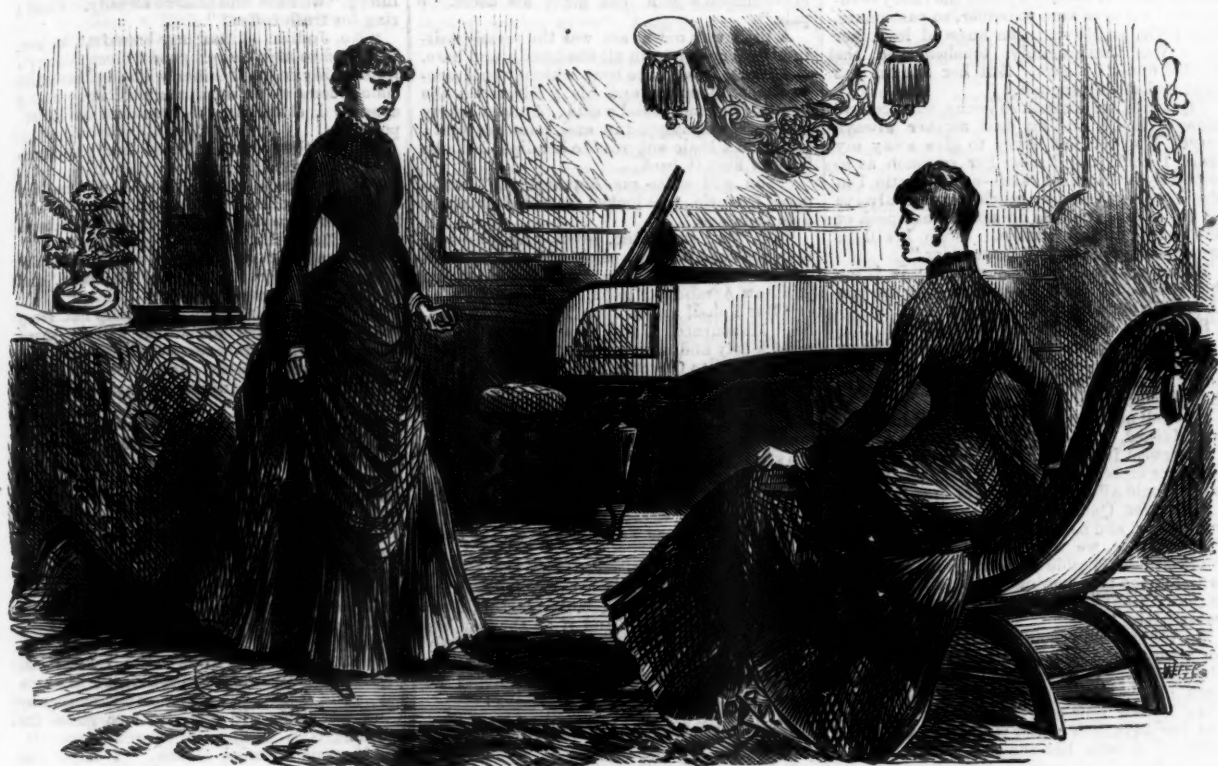
"Certainly, unless, indeed, that same supernatural power should throw its influence upon me, and drag me there against my will, in which case you must not hold me responsible for what ensues. If the spirit of the murdered lady has any of the attributes of Lurline, it will be quite useless for me to struggle against the spell."

"I see you are determined to treat the whole matter as a joke, but I have your promise, and so I am satisfied. Let me make one more request—that you won't mention the subject either to Sir Travice or my daughter, for they are both sensitive, and it might disturb them."

He gave the required assurance willingly, and soon afterwards the party broke up for the night.

(To be continued.)

THE NEEDLE AND THREAD PLANT.—The Agave Americana holds the place of Asiatic hemp and Egyptian papyrus. Ancient hieroglyphics were inscribed on the leaves, macerated in water and glued together as the bark of paper mulberry. Much attention has been paid to the manufacture of paper from its leaves. "The fabrication of this material is destined to be a great industry," says the "Catalogue of Mexican Products," owing to the quality and cheapness of the material.



["IT IS FALSE!" CRIED MAVOURNEEN, "MY MOTHER WAS AN ANGEL."]

NOVELETTE.]

MAVOURNEEN.

—:—

CHAPTER I.

Her name was Kathleen Verity, but she was always called Mavourneen. She lived in a little village overlooking the Irish Sea and close to Carlingford Bay; and at seventeen was as fair and sweet a maiden as the heart could desire.

Perhaps the quiet life she led had imparted that pensive air to her lovely, young face, that melancholy expression to the beautiful dark grey eyes that in moments of passion or pain grew well-nigh black under their heavy fringes.

A wild rose colour bloomed on her cheeks, and short, clustering curls surrounded her face and nestled on the nape of the snowy neck.

Isolated as her life was she was yet not destitute of lovers, chief of whom was Quentin Derrick, son of the priest's sister—a handsome Irish youth, for whom most of the girls went sighing.

But Mavourneen's thoughts did not dwell upon lovers, either possible or assured. As yet her heart was as a child's, and all its passion was spent upon the frail, sweet mother who lay dying day by day.

To her the sea was a friend—if a boisterous one—the birds her companions, and she spent whole hours on the little sandy beach drawing in life and strength with every breath; growing fairer and stronger year by year.

The simple folk round had always a hearty word for her, and seeing her lissome figure afar off would draw one another's attention to it with such words as—

"Shure and it is Miss Mavourneen; it's herself that alone would go out so far wid the

tide coming in," or "'Tis Mistress Verity's colleen; may the good saints bless her!"

So she lived in an atmosphere of love, content with her life, not looking into the future; and, when her mother suddenly grew worse, and the kindly doctor told the girl she had not long to stay, it came on her with a terrible shock.

Mrs. Verity had long ago "set her house in order," and but for Mavourneen would have been glad to go, for her lot had been a sad one.

So, one summer morning, having commended her child to the care of an old school friend, she laid back amongst her pillows and closing her eyes, passed away quietly, without a word or a sigh.

The funeral preparations were very simple, and all through the hours which elapsed between her death and burial, Mavourneen moved and spoke as one in a trance.

When it was all over the lawyer begged her attendance in the little drawing-room, where Father O'Donegal and his nephew, with one or two other friends, were already gathered.

She sat down between uncle and nephew totally unconscious of the passionate pity in the latter's eyes; and with hands loosely clasped, and head bowed down, listened to the conditions of her mother's simple will.

At the expiration of three days she was to set out for England, and reaching Liverpool would be met by Mrs. Carr—her mother's friend—who would carry her off to her own home in Yorkshire. Here she was to remain until her majority, when she could if she chose return to her birthplace or sell it.

A hundred a-year was to be paid to Mrs. Carr for her maintenance; the remaining fifty of her small annuity was her own, to do as she pleased with.

During her enforced absence Rook House was to be let, and the proceeds of the rental were to go to increase the principal, carefully invested for her by the dead woman.

Mavourneen started a little when she learned

her destination, and lifting wide, piteous eyes to Quentin, said,—

"Oh, if I could but have stayed here!" (and was blind to the quick rapture in his face.

She could never quite tell how the next three days passed; but her last night at Rook House came all too soon. She went sadly down to the beach to take a last farewell of her favourite haunts, and presently she was joined by Quentin Derrick.

The youth was very pale and haggard, but she was too absorbed to notice either this or his agitation.

With bent head and aching heart she paced the little strip of sand with him, and listened dully to the swish of the waves as they crept nearer and nearer, thinking that she should come here no more for four long years.

Quentin was the first to speak. "To-morrow, Mavourneen, you will be far away, and it's ourselves will be sorrowing for you."

Like him she spoke with the faintest, prettiest accent possible.

"You will not forget me, Quentin! I could not bear to fall out of the hearts and thoughts of those I have known so long."

"How can we forget?" he broke out passionately. "We are not a fickle people, Aaron; and he tried to take her hand, but something in his manner and voice had startled her, and she drew back with a little deprecating gesture.

But Quentin was too agitated to keep silence, too determined to let her slip so easily.

"Mavourneen," he pleaded, "listen to me for a little while only. To-morrow you turn your back on us for four years, and if I let you go without a word, who knows if I'll ever see your dear face again? Ah sweet, I love you, I love you. Oh yes! for once you must hear me. I want you to give yourself to me, so that no man may rob me of my treasure. I want you to lay your dear hands in mine, and promise that, happen what may, you will come back to me, and make me happy."

The boy looked so handsome, so earnest,

standing darkly defined against the ruddy evening sky; his eyes were so tender, so passionate, that little as Mavourneen knew of love, her heart was inexpressibly touched, and she thrilled under his gaze. But her answer was quiet and steady enough.

"Quentin, we are both so young, what can we know of love? And my dear mother always prayed I would not hurry to give away my heart. I could not disobey her so much as to promise you anything; and—and Quentin, I'm afraid we've been too much together always for me to love you. So do not let us speak of this again until I return. Then I will be twenty-one, and you two years older."

He interrupted her once more. "Is it me that you would doubt, Mavourneen, or are you afraid of yourself?"

She shook her head.

"I think we are not wise enough to know our own hearts or wishes," she said very gently. "And if, while I am away, you were to change, who could blame you?"

"I shall not change!" quietly, and his dark eyes flashed. "I am yours always."

Her sweet face grew painful, but she was not quite convinced of his enduring constancy, and so could afford to be hopeful.

"Oh! yes, Quentin, it is you who will love some other, and be happy with her; and now, if you please, we will talk of other things. Come sit down beside me on this rock, and let us watch the tide coming in together. It will be many a day before I hear the sound of the waves again."

He obeyed her moodily, and sat regarding her with passionate, half-sulky eyes, as she lifted her gaze to where, like a white bird, the Rock House nestled amongst the cliffs; and when he saw how pale she had grown in the past few days, how weary was the droop of the beautiful mouth, like the generous youth he was he put his own trouble behind, and strove to comfort her.

"You will have so much to see away in England, and I will have my work (and I mean to get on), and we will so fill our days that the four years will pass long before we are aware of it. I shall go to Dublin, and shall pass all my examinations well, and when I am a full blown-doctor, then, perhaps, Mavourneen, you will be proud to call me friend."

"And am I not now?" with gentle reproach. "It's yourself, Quentin, that is the brightest and bravest lad in the village."

He flushed under her praise like the varicest school-girl, and looked inclined to kiss her, but refrained, being doubtful as to the manner in which she would receive this attention. So for a long time they sat together in silence, whilst the waves crept nearer and nearer, glowing purple and gold under the evening sky. At last, with a sigh, Quentin rose.

"We must be going," he said, regretfully, "unless we wish to be caught by the tide. Give me your hand, Mavourneen, and let me help you up the rocks."

Soon they stood side by side on level land, and the girl looked sorrowfully round at the green and undulating meadows, the distant bays; then, with tears in her beautiful eyes, turned away, and without a word her companion went homewards with her.

The next morning all the little village of Arrahdown was astir with unwonted excitement; everybody had turned out to see the last of "Miss Mavourneen."

Some of the women were crying, others bewailing her loss in the hysterical manner peculiar to Irish of the lower class, but all were unfeignedly sorry; and when she issued from Rock House, pale and wan, some of the bolder ones pressed forward to shake hands with her, and force small gifts upon her. She looked round for Quentin, but he was not visible until she came to the beach, and then her little bodyguard fell back, and one or two whispered amongst themselves,—

"Shure 'twas a pity such a handsome lad should be so wretched; an' faith, 'tis Miss

Mavourneen's goin' has made his cheek o pale."

A little way out at sea was the vessel waiting to carry her from all she loved; and here, still closer, tossed the boat which would convey her, Quentin, and his "Riverence the prate," to the vessel's side. Amidst hearty good-byes she stepped in and took her seat; and then a little sob rose to her lips, but she bravely kept it back.

"You will write me, Mavourneen," whispered Quentin, who looked scarcely less miserable than she.

"Oh, yes; and often, often. And be sure that you send me news of all I know and love! and as the seasons change you must tell me just how Arrahdown looks."

"But I shall not be here, but away in Dublin, Mavourneen; and, maybe, I'll be the most lonely and miserable of the two."

It seemed to Quentin that the men took a vicious pleasure in shortening their journey as much as possible; for soon he had bidden Mavourneen good-bye, and the boat was turned landwards. Then he lifted his eyes, and saw the girl standing upon the deck pale as death, with tightly clasped hands. He waved his handkerchief, but she made no responsive gesture, only her eyes yearned on him and the lovely land she was leaving, through a mist of bitter tears.

When his foot touched the shore, and kindly voices made anxious inquiries as to how the "colleen" had borne parting from dear "Ould Oinland," and if at the last her heart had failed her, he turned impatiently away, and hurried homewards, ashamed of his own emotion. As he entered the house he heard his mother's housekeeper singing:

"When, by the broside I watch the bright embers,
Then all my heart flies to England and thee;
Cravin' to know if my darlin' remembers,
Or if her thoughts may be crossin' to me."

He dashed upstairs to his room, and perhaps it was no shame to him that tears were on his cheeks. He looked towards the distant sea, where the white sails of the vessel that bore her away were still visible, and he stretched out his hands in fruitless longing and appeal.

"O' may the angels awakin' and sleepin'
Watch o'er my bird in the land far away,
And it's my prayers shall consign to their keepin'
Care o' my jewel by night and by day."

sang the woman below, and the youth covered his eyes a moment, groaning out "Aroon, aroon, will I ever see you again? Ah! sweet-heart, will they change you, spoil you, so that you long for Arrahdown and all its pleasant ways no more?"

How fearfully long that day was! He was at a loss how to fill the weary hours; he turned disgustedly from the bays, because he and Mavourneen had so often drifted together upon them; the rocks and the meadows were loathsome, and he heartily wished himself at Dublin.

CHAPTER II.

On the day following Mrs. Verity's funeral, Mrs. Carr, of Hawthorn Lodge, Beachford, entered her well-appointed breakfast-room.

She was a handsome matron, whose charms, although somewhat full blown, were attractive to many men yet. Her bright, brown hair had no silver threads to mar its glossy beauty—her eyes, though shrewd, were kindly; and if, as her daughters told her, she was cultivating a double chin, that was surely her misfortune, and not her fault.

Two young ladies were lounging in easy chairs; one reading a novel, the other engaged in making hideous grimaces at the snarling little dog upon her sister's knee. Nor did she desist from this occupation when Mrs. Carr entered. But the elder and darker of the two turned her stately head.

"Good-morning, mamma!" she said, duti-

fully; "we have breakfasted already. Shall I ring for fresh coffee?"

"No, Judith. I had my breakfast in bed. I wanted to think over poor Eileen Verity's letter. My dears, it is her wish that her child should come to us until she is of age; and I suppose I shall have to meet her at Liverpool!"

Carrie, the younger, lifted her handsome face to her sister's level.

"I hope she'll be a good sort, so that the house isn't spoiled. I've small patience with folks who do and leave their encombrances to others," but she laughed as she spoke.

"It is a great nuisance, of course," Judith added, coldly. "Has she no relatives? and has she any money?"

"Oh, yes, quite enough to keep her from want. Indeed, her allowance will be more than sufficient; and even were it otherwise I could not let Eileen's child lack anything." At which words Judith looked coldly contemptuous.

"It is to be hoped," said Carrie, resuming her occupation of teasing the dog, "that she is not very pretty; if she is, well, good-bye to our chance of winning Outram Pembroke; and really, Judith, you are not so young as you were—twenty-four is getting dangerously near to fifty. Of course we could not both marry him, but I am quite willing to resign my share in this eligible young man for your sake. I am afraid to wait a little longer, using two years your junior;" and she laughed lightly at her sister's angry expression.

"Be quiet, Carrie, I want to talk to you both seriously. You know what I have told you about Mavourneen's parentage? Let me say, girls, I hope most sincerely neither by word nor look will you let her guess the truth!"

"Mamma!" cried Carrie, "I hope you don't really believe we could be such sneaks. Why, anyone who would twit her with what is her misfortune ought to be pilloried."

"I do wish, my dear, you would try to be less emphatic. And do you think Mr. Pembroke will approve slang or anything bordering on flippancy?"

"I am sure he likes me!" the girl retorted, laughing; "even if it is in a patronising sort of way. And as for his uncle—well, he says of me 'that little imp is worth forty Judiths;' and do you know, mamma, once or twice he has actually called me 'my dear.'"

"I wish," said Judith, "you would keep to the subject in hand. When is this wait to start for England?"

"On Friday, and this is Wednesday. Girls, you must be very kind to her! Poor little Mavourneen, she stands all alone in the world." "Mavourneen! Is that her baptismal name? How very absurd!"

"Judith!" said Mrs. Carr, with a suspicion of anger; "you seem determined to regard the poor child with dislike. You even quibble at her name; but understand I expect you to treat her with all courtesy;" and, as her mother was mistress of the house, Judith held her peace.

She knew it was vain to rebel, for, kindly and generous as Mrs. Carr was, she exacted implicit obedience from all who came under her sway, and not even handsome, stately Judith dared openly defy her.

An uncomfortable silence fell upon them all, which Carrie broke by jumping up, and exclaiming she saw Outram Pembroke coming towards the house. A slight flush crossed her face, but she showed no other sign of emotion.

Judith rose, and smoothed her already sleek braids, and settled herself in a more graceful pose; but in Carrie's manner there was even a slight dash of defiance, and she ran her fingers through her short locks somewhat to their detriment.

It was not long before the young man was announced, and as soon as he had finished greeting his hostess and Judith, Carrie pounced upon him with,—

"I've such news for you; sit down beside me, and listen with all your ears."

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He took the chair she had wheeled up for him, laughing a little; then Judith's voice, suddenly grown sweet, said,—

"Oh, Mr. Pembroke, you know how Carrie exaggerates little things! I am really afraid her news will have no interest for you!"

"I shall be better able to judge that when I have heard them," rather idly.

Carrie shot a triumphant glance at her sister, and then proceeded to tell of the advent of the stranger in their midst.

"Judith don't cotton to the idea, but I say the more the merrier."

"I am afraid," the elder sister said, sweetly, "that the peace or pleasure of our little circle will be wholly destroyed; and you know, Mr. Pembroke, I am nothing if not domestic," and she smiled on him. "Now this poor girl has never been out of Ireland, and I am almost sure will prove a firebrand in our midst. I quite expect she will be a little hoyden, and encourage Carrie to follow her in any mad freak."

"I don't need much encouragement," Carrie said, with a funny nose. "I'm always ripe for mischief, as I think you know, Mr. Pembroke. Judith is the good young woman who never looked over the traces. Now, how shall we spend the morning—for of course you intend staying to lunch?"

"Thank you, I shall be pleased, but perhaps Mrs. Carr will object?"

"Oh, no, you are always heartily welcome, and Carrie issues invites at her own sweet will."

The girl started up, and, turning to her sister, said,—

"Come into the garden, Ju; it will be heavenly under the limes this morning. Come, Mr. Pembroke!"

He rose leisurely, but Judith retained her seat.

"I am not going," she said coldly. "I have work to do," so the young couple passed out together into the square patch of ground known as the garden.

It was not very large, but the lawn was well kept, the flower-beds bright with many blossoms, and the whole surrounded by a high brick wall, flanked inside with limes, so that the house was completely shut out from the curious gaze of passers-by.

Under one of the limes Carrie flung herself with a careless grace the young man could hardly fail to see. She was very handsome, he thought, and her figure was perfection.

Then, despite her somewhat fast ways and slangy speech, she was very popular, because of her generosity and freedom from envy and malice.

Could he do better than please his uncle, Sir Blount Pembroke, by marrying her? She was most emphatically not his ideal woman, but he might do worse than make her his wife.

If Carrie had only known it she would not have spoiled her chance of being Mrs. Pembroke; but that she did so is quite evident.

"Why don't you smoke?" she said, and drawing out a cigarette lit it, and inserted it between her pretty white teeth.

Ostram looked disgusted, and seeing this Carrie removed her "weed" as she called it, and indulged in a hearty laugh.

"Oh, how shocked you are! Did you never see a woman smoke before? And, pray, why shouldn't we? Do you think 'sauce for the gander' is not 'sauce for the goose'?"

"Is it a habit with you, Carrie?" (By the way, everybody called her Carrie.)

"Not exactly that, but when cousin Jim was here he taught me; it made me sick at first, but I rather like it now," and she laughed again, but there was a shade of bitterness in her laughter.

"And does Miss Carr emulate your example?"

"Oh, no; Judith is 'a perfect woman nobly planned.' 'Tis I who play the black sheep. But to please you I will throw this away," and she flung the cigarette far from her. "Now smooth the frowns out of your forehead, and look amiable! Do you know

you haven't asked a single question about the orphan coming to us? Aren't you the least bit curious?"

"I must confess I am not; but as you seem to expect it I'll begin a regular catechism. Firstly, what is her name? Secondly, who gave her that name?"

"Don't be stupid! Her name is Mavourneen Verity, or rather Kathleen Verity; but she is called Mavourneen. She is seventeen, and mamma says that she should be beautiful, because Mrs. Verity was the loveliest woman she ever saw."

"And has she no relatives?"

"None, poor little beggar! Isn't it rough on her? Well, she will be with us in three days now. I guess she will be here about seven in the evening, and as she will be tired and a little nervous, perhaps you had best not come in until the following day. If, as Judith suggests, she is a little savage, we shall have to forbid you the house until she has got a thin veneer of civilisation."

"That would be awfully cruel, Carrie, and not at all the sort of treatment I am likely to submit to. I spend some of my best hours here."

"Yes," she said, with sudden sharpness, "because I amuse you even while I disgust you; but, indeed, Mr. Pembroke I cannot be otherwise. I suppose I was born vulgar," and she sighed a little, whilst her dark eyes grew soft, and her whole manner more womanly, so that the young man felt more drawn towards her than he had ever done before.

"You are quite clever enough, Carrie, and quite sufficiently determined to make yourself like other girls if you choose."

"Oh, don't lecture!" with another swift change of mood. "You are scarcely old enough to be my monitor; and don't you know that it is only my *chic* that has won me an entrance to Pembroke Hall. That hoary old sinner, Sir Blount, would not so much as look at me if I were ugly or demure. Do you know I often wonder what sort of husband and father he would have made? It is hard to imagine him in either capacity."

"It is, indeed; and I fancy had he given us a Lady Pembroke she would have been a miserable woman indeed—he is such a terrible domestic autocrat. And although most folks think my position assured I am very far from feeling it is; the least indiscretion or disobedience on my part would be fatal to me, and he would choose another heir. I am the sixth."

"And pray what should you do were he to disinherit you?"

"Emigrate. Muscular strength and determination are just the things most needed at the colonies, and I have both."

When Carrie repeated this conversation to Judith she shrugged her shapely shoulders, and thought,—

"If this is how the case stands I must look elsewhere for a husband. The colonies would not suit me," and then she wondered a little at Carrie's abstraction.

She would have been considerably surprised could she have read the girl's mind, have seen the workings of her heart. Poor Carrie! she was dreaming of Ostram, and her dreams ran thus,—

"If only he would offend my uncle! Then I could show him how true and fond a woman can be. I am just fitted for an emigrant's wife; there I should be in my element, here I am voted masculine and vulgar."

Nobody guessed that she had a secret care, a secret sorrow, she was always so gay, so debonair; but, none the less, Ostram had all unwittingly won her love, and she knew to her cost that he did not approve her; that, cordially as he liked her, she was perhaps the last woman in the world he would seek for his wife.

"And if I do not marry him," she thought, "I shall never be a wife! Heigho! what an idiot I am to care for a man to whom I am less than nothing!"

CHAPTER III.

Mrs. Carr started forward to meet a pale, slim girl, who looked around with an air of utter bewilderment.

"My dear," she said, gently, "I think you are Mavourneen, your face is so like your mother's?" and as she felt the cordial clasp of warm, soft fingers, heard the tenderness of the low, refined voice, Mavourneen's eyes filled with sudden tears.

"Yes," she said, simply; "and you are Mrs. Carr? My mother said you would love me for her sake."

The faint, sweet accent, the low wailing tones were so like the dead woman's that Mrs. Carr stooped and kissed her, and then, as though a little ashamed of her emotion, turned to look after the luggage.

"How many boxes have you, Mavourneen?"

"Only two. My friends said you would get me everything necessary, and when I came away Father O'Donoghue gave me a ten-pound note, though, indeed, it was ill he could spare it. You see, he has so many sick and poor who need his help."

The luggage was speedily secured, and soon the girl and her companion were well on their way to Beachford, and the latter was regarding Mavourneen with some anxiety. Presently she said,—

"My dear, I am afraid you are very delicate!"

"Oh, no; I am strong indeed. But it is almost never that I am rosy, and I look paler in black; but I am never ill."

"I am glad to hear you say so; and now, Mavourneen, let me tell you something about my two girls. Judith, the eldest, is twenty-four, tall, dark and handsome; she gives one an impression of coldness, but she is a good girl, and you must try to make allowance for her manner. Carrie is two years younger, not so handsome, but much more popular, and I fancy you will be good friends. Dear, for your mother's sake and your own, I will do my best to make you happy," and leaning forward she kissed the girl's soft cheek.

It was almost dusk when they reached Beachford, the train being fully two hours late, owing to a block upon the line; but Mavourneen saw with satisfaction that the country round was wild and beautiful, and asked eagerly if they were near the sea.

"We are within an easy distance of it—perhaps twelve miles. See, the girls are at the gate waiting to give you your welcome," she added, as the pony trotted towards the Lodge. "The darkest is Judith."

The faint light of evening fell all around the stately beautiful figure, in its robes of some soft crimson material. The proud, dark face looked prouder and colder than usual, and the mouth was set in a straight, hard line.

Mavourneen's heart sank within her but she was a little comforted when her eyes rested on Carrie, who, in consideration for the new-comer's recent loss, wore a white dress with black velvet bows, and a band of velvet about her waist.

She opened the gate as Dobbin came to a standstill, and with hands outstretched welcomed the beautiful orphan.

"We are glad to have you with us," she said, heartily; but not being what she called a "gushing sort," did not attempt to kiss her. "Come and be introduced to Judith."

She linked her hand in Mavourneen's arm, and drew her towards the stately, repellent figure.

"This is my sister, and as she is a young woman of some character you'll have to 'kowitz' to her—we all do."

The little timid hand fluttered into the outstretched palm, and the wistful, beautiful eyes looked into the dark ones above as though seeking some kindness there.

Then Mavourneen shrank back a little, knowing in her heart that Judith disliked her, and that they never could be friends. But she

had not much time for thought; Carrie's voice rang out freshly and clearly.

"Mamma, you must be awfully tired! Run to your room, you old dear, and whilst you are dressing, Jane shall bring you up a cup of tea. I am going to take charge of Mavourneen. Will you come too, Judith?"

"No; I daresay Miss Verity will not care to hold an audience so soon," and she turned towards the house with Mrs. Carr.

"You must have been mad, mamma!" she said, in an angry whisper, "to bring that girl here. She is very beautiful, just with that sort of beauty which appeals most strongly to men like Outram Pembroke. But if I can help it she shall never be his wife or mistress of the Hall."

Mrs. Carr's handsome face darkened, and she drew coldly away from her daughter.

"You are talking foolishly, and in a very unwomanly fashion, Judith. If Mavourneen Verity should win the prize you covet, I for one should not be sorry. She would make Outram a happy man. You would not!"

With that little shot she went to see her own room, where the echoes of Carrie's light laughter and saucy words reached her.

"I wish Judith were more like her. With all her flippant ways Carrie is generous and honourable. Poor little Mavourneen, I am afraid her life here will not be too pleasant."

When she went down to the drawing-room she found both daughters waiting her. Carrie said,—

"Mamma, Mavourneen is quite wearied out, so I persuaded her to stay in her room; and, if you please, I will carry up her dinner."

"Which rôle does Miss Verity intend adopting; that of invalid or child?" asked Judith, with a sneer which disfigured her handsome face.

"Judith, Judith!" remonstrated Mrs. Carr, and proceeded to pile Mavourneen's plate with delicate morsels of chicken, whilst Carrie spread a white cloth over a small tray, and adorned it with two specimen vases of cloves and jasmine.

She went swiftly upstairs, and found the girl sitting before the open window, her chin resting in her hollowed palm.

"Come, no brooding. It is not allowed at Hawthorne Lodge, and see I have brought you your dinner. But first drink this wine, and when I see a little colour in your pretty pale cheeks I'll run away. So—ah! that is better, young woman. If there is anything more you need just ring, and I will look you up again before I go to bed."

Mavourneen rose swiftly, and crossing to Carrie stood on tiptoe, drew down the handsome head, and kissed her cheek.

"I will never forget your goodness," she said, simply; "and I would thank you indeed if I but knew how."

And by that little action she made a lifelong friend of Carrie.

The next morning, despite the fatigue of the previous day, she was downstairs long before any creature, save the housemaid, was stirring. She asked what time the family breakfasted, and was told nine.

"So you see, miss," added the girl, looking with undisguised admiration into the lovely young face, "you have two whole hours before you."

"Then I think I will go for a walk. If you will kindly tell me the way to the fields I can see from my window."

"I shall be glad, miss; but you must have a drink of milk, and a mite of something to eat before you go. If you will please sit down I'll bring them at once."

Mavourneen obeyed with a smile, and when she had broken her fast went through the garden with the friendly housemaid, and was soon hurrying towards the pleasant meadows beyond.

The air was fresh and balmy, the dewy grass and wild flowers scarcely sank beneath her light tread; and a sense of freedom thrilled through all her veins.

She wandered on, finding many-hued blossoms

under the hedgerows, filling her hands with the mildly fragrant and fragile flowers; and, growing conscious at last of hunger and fatigue, turned her steps towards home.

But she had come by tortuous paths, and it was not long before she felt convinced she had lost herself. She leaned over a gate trying to discover her bearings, but failing signally, and a perplexed look settled on the lovely *mignon* face.

It was with a sense of relief she heard steps coming towards her, but when she lifted her eyes and saw a man not only young, but handsome, she was afraid to address him. As he passed he gave one swift glance at the sweet, troubled face, and involuntary admiration leapt into his eyes. When he had gone a little way he turned to look at the slim, graceful figure in its sombre robes, and met the wistful gaze of Mavourneen's beautiful eyes. Without a second thought he hurried towards her, and, lifting his hat, said, gravely,—

"I beg your pardon, but can I do anything for you?"

"I have lost my way, I think," she said simply. "I want to get back to Beachford."

A smile broke the line of the firm, yet pleasant mouth. "I know every man, woman, and child in the village, and as you are a total stranger to me, I fancy you must be Mrs. Carr's ward."

"Yes; I am Kathleen Verity, and you have heard of me?"

"Carrie told me of your coming, but she called you Mavourneen. Now, as I am quite a friend of the family I shall take you home. I am Outram Pembroke."

The girl blushed slightly.

"I would be sorry to trouble you so far, and I will be able to find my way if only you will direct me."

But Outram was determined; he thought he had never met so lovely and dainty a maiden, and was resolved to see more of her.

"If her mind is like her face, the man who wins her should be happy." Then he walked on by her side, chatting of indifferent things, watching the play of her features, the changing light in her dark eyes.

"And do you think you shall like Beachford?"

"Ah, yes! but it is sorry I am to miss the sound of the waves. They crept up and up, all round about our house; and when the tempest came, they rose almost as high as the rocks. Sometimes the spray would dash upon our windows, and it would seem as if wind and waves must wash or blow our home away."

"And you were not afraid?"

"Surely not! Do you not see I lived always there, and the sea was a friend to me; in the summer I almost lived upon it, and Quentin would take me to the neighbouring bays."

"And is it impertinent to ask who is Quentin?"

"Oh, no!" with a bright, upward glance. "He is as my own brother; we have grown up together, and always he was so good and kind to me, and being two years older than I am, and very strong, he made himself my protector."

"You were grieved to leave him behind?" with an odd sense of jealousy.

"Yes; but it is not long he will stay at Arrahdown. He will soon be away at Dublin, where he will learn to be a great doctor."

"You have great faith in him?"

"Ah! why not? He is very clever, and Father O'Donogh (his uncle) hopes he will make for himself a name to be honoured." Then, as she recognised some of the landmarks so familiar to him, she added, "and surely I will not trouble you to come further. I will be able to find the lodge quite easily."

"But Miss Verity, have pity upon me, I am so terribly hungry that I am sure I should never reach the hall in my famished condition. I am going to invite myself to breakfast. Believe me I am almost one of the Carr family."

"Does that mean you are engaged to

Carrie?" with a naive frankness that amused him.

"No, I am quite a free man," smiling; "but why did you select Carrie as my future wife?"

"Because I thought you would not care for Judith. She is not nice."

"She is very handsome!" with quiet amusement in eye and voice, "and her manners are correct. Now, confess you think Carrie a trifle too hoydenish and flippant."

The beautiful, dewy eyes met his unflinchingly.

"I think her very kind and generous; it is not she who would grudge me a share of her home."

He held open the lodge-gate for her to pass through, and Judith, watching from the window, frowned darkly, then said, with a short laugh,—

"She has begun her work already. I hope, mamma, you are satisfied."

But Mrs. Carr had risen with a smile to greet the young people.

"I have brought the lost sheep back, and will you please reward me with a breakfast? I am positively famished," and Outram slipped into a chair between Carrie and Mavourneen.

CHAPTER IV.

The first of September, and such an intensely hot day that it seemed stolen from July! The sky was a soft, intense blue, the air was heavy with the scent of heliotrope and clematis, and all the beds in the Carrs garden flamed with dalias, asters, and love-lies-bleeding.

These flowers, which herald the coming of autumn, seemed strangely out of place on this truly summer-like day, in which there was not the slightest suspicion of dying glory.

Even the birds had forgotten to sing, and there was not a breath to stir the drooping leaves of the limes; the bees droned on, almost too lazy to gather the sweets so lavishly offered.

The butterflies flitted from flower to flower; and as Mavourneen took in every detail of the beautiful, homelike scene, she drew a deep breath of satisfaction.

She was sitting under the limes, a book upon her lap, but she was not reading; for just a few moments since Outram Pembroke had swung open the iron gate and joined her.

"And so you are alone?" he said, with a sigh of pure thankfulness. "What a lucky fellow I seem to be lately! I was quite afraid I should find Carrie and Miss Carr with you."

"They have gone to Costhorpe, Mr. Pembroke; but I stayed at home because my head was aching badly. Is it not a divine day?"

"I didn't come to talk about the weather," coolly. "I keep my small gossip for others, Mavourneen," and he smiled a little as his unwonted familiarity brought the crimson flush to her face.

Her head was somewhat averted, and he noticed with the eye of an artist how perfect was the soft curve of cheek and chin, how beautiful the slender, white throat!

Of late this little Irish girl had grown very dear to him—so dear, indeed, that all his hopes were centred in her, all the love of his life given to her; and if she would only listen to his pleading he thought he would be quite willing to forego his inheritance, if need were, for her sweet sake.

The tall, heavy-headed dahlias screened them from the observation of any curious domestic, and from the road it was impossible to see them; and so growing bolder, Outram possessed himself of the little slender hands, and looked into the lovely young eyes with a world of passion in his own.

"Mavourneen!" he said, in a voice made strange by deep passion; "Mavourneen! what will you say to me? Will you tell me to hope, sweetheart? I love you, and you only."

A shadow flickered over her face as she

thought of poor Quentin, and seeing it, Outram's heart well-nigh failed him; but "faint heart never won fair lady," and he would not let her go easily.

"My dear!" he said, with a simple, manly dignity. "My dear! tell me the truth now; and even if your answer is not what I dared to hope it might be I shall not complain. We English are not given to whining; and if, sweetheart, I am to be made happy, you shall never regret your trust in me." He paused, and waited for her to speak, which she did, after a scarcely perceptible silence.

"It is yourself that loves me, not knowing who or what I am. And oh! is it wise so to give me your heart without question or doubt? It is so little I can tell you of myself."

"But, Mavourneen, this is no answer," the young man urged. "I know you are as good as you are beautiful. Ah! sweet, may I not hope?"

With a sudden tender gesture she turned to him, her eyes bright with love, her sweet mouth tremulous.

"Outram, you *know* I love you," and then was silent, her face hidden on his breast, her breath coming quick and hard.

He kissed the bowed head passionately, and then, lifting her face with gentle force, looked into it with all a lover's first rapture.

"Are you frightened, little one?" he whispered. "Why are you trembling so?"

"My joy chokes me, makes me feel afraid," she answered, with that shy candour which was one of her greatest charms; "and it is that I would be quiet awhile, that I may understand."

He drew her close again.

"You shall be quiet for hours if you will only stay so," he said, with a happy laugh.

Presently the girl asked,—

"It is what your uncle will say that troubles me, Outram? I fear he will not be pleased."

"I am my own master, sweetheart, and shall please myself. Should you be afraid, Mavourneen, to start housekeeping on three hundred a year, which is precisely what I have to call my own?"

"Why we should be rich!" with a quick, upward glance, and sudden clinging to him; "but oh! how sore my heart would be if I knew I had robbed you of all you prized."

"I should be content so long as I had you," he answered, honestly enough. "You are dearer to me than ancient lands, my home or even my honour, little darling! And you shall not long be left in doubt as to our future. To-night I shall tell Sir Blount all. If he approves, well and good; if he disapproves, well and good still."

She regarded him with undisguised admiration, he was so brave so handsome; and what wonder if for the time she forgot the poor Irish lad, who also was willing to give his life for her, if by so doing he could serve her.

"Let me tell you all that I know of myself," she said, after a long pause; "it is so little; but perhaps Mrs. Carr can tell you more. Ever since I can remember I have lived at Rock House, and we had no friends, my mother and I, save Father O'Donegal and Quentin. And always there was a shadow on my mother's face, and an ache in her heart, and I knew, even when I was quite small, that my father had brought it there."

"She never spoke of him, and once, when I asked her was he dead, she pressed her hands together thus, and said, 'Dead to me, and dead to you,' and then sobbed so bitterly that it was never again I dared to speak of him."

"I think," dreamily "that perhaps he ran away from her, and that he had wronged her cruelly. Some of the people at Arrahdown remembered him; but he went away when I was scarcely six months old, and they say he never came again. And mother—well, she pined and pined through long years, and at last the burden grew too hard to bear, and so she died."

That sweet voice faltered and broke, the tender face paled, and that little downward droop of the mouth was more than usually noticeable.

"And there is no one else in the world who

has any claim to you?" the young man asked, when he had comforted her after the fashion of lovers.

"Oh, but, yes, there is. Can I forget Quentin, and Father O'Donegal?"

"I hope not, my dear girl; ingratitude is not a pretty quality; but I meant, really, have you no living relatives?"

"None in all the world."

"Then you will henceforth belong wholly to me," with a jubilant ring in his voice; "and you will find me a terrible despot; jealous, exacting—"

She interrupted him with a low laugh.

"I am not afraid; and indeed you must not think you monopolise all the spirit. I am not at all a meek young woman."

"You will be after a month of my tuition and surveillance."

Her quick ear caught the sound of wheels along the dusty road, and she started a little from her lover. "That is Dobbin, I would know his trot anywhere; and oh! I'm afraid Judith will be angry with us."

"But why? Are we answerable to her for our actions?" a trifle hotly.

"No, but she does not approve me, and she will think such great good luck is not for me."

The gate was swung open, and Carrie entered first, bearing several packages. She glanced curiously at the couple under the trees, and by some intuition knew they were confessed lovers. For a moment jealousy and love held her silent, drove the colour from her cheeks; but she was a brave girl as well as generous, and dropping her parcels, went forward with outstretched hand.

"When the cat's away, Mr. Pembroke, I need not finish the proverb," and if her laugh was less blithe than usual, no one noticed that. "Mavourneen, child, how lovely you are with that tinge of colour on your cheeks? Is she not, Ju?"

Judith advanced. "She looks wonderfully well," coldly. "I thought your head ached too badly to allow you to venture out?"

"I have found a certain cure for that kind of ailment, Miss Carr," Outram said, with a malicious smile. "Are you anxious to obtain the recipe?"

"Thank you," still more icily; "I am not a victim to the malady," and she walked away, but not before she heard Outram beg for an immediate interview with her mother. Her heart was full of hate and rage, and she almost prayed some harm might befall the girl who had won the prize for which she had striven. She went slowly up to Carrie's room, and, sitting down, waited for her sister to join her.

She came at last, and did not appear overjoyed to find Judith in her chamber. "What do you want?" she asked a trifle crossly, and sat down by the window. She looked pale and tired, and her lips were set in a hard line.

"Well," said Judith, watching her keenly; "You see all has happened as I foretold."

"I know you are always croaking; but what particular thing has occurred just now to verify your prophecies?"

"Are you blind?" questioned Judith fiercely. "Don't you see that what I feared from the first has happened; that Outram Pembroke has asked that nameless girl to be his wife, and she, of course, has jumped at the chance!"

"As either of us would," with a short, mirthless laugh. "Well Ju, all run for a prize, but only one can win, so with all my heart I wish Mavourneen joy."

She spoke the words bravely and truthfully, even though her own heart was bleeding and torn.

"You're a fool!" Judith said, beside herself with anger.

"Softly, softly, that is unparliamentary language," retorted Carrie, with a smile; "and quite at variance, my dear, with your usual refinement."

"She shall never marry him if I have power

to prevent the match; and do you suppose Sir Blount will acknowledge a girl whose father is unknown, who, perhaps, has no real claim to the name she bears?"

"But how is he to know that?"

"I shall tell him, if no one else will."

"You would not be so mean," Carrie cried, with flashing eyes. "And you know very well mamma is as sure of Mrs. Verity's marriage as she is of her own. And even if Mavourneen is less fortunate than we in her birth, that is her misfortune, and no shame to her. Pooh! there is far too much value set upon birth."

Judith listened with curling lip, and when Carrie had talked herself breathless, said, with a shade of wonder in her cold tones.

"Do you mean to say you are not disappointed at the choice Outram Pembroke has made?"

"Oh I don't so go far," lightly, "but I never supposed he would throw the handkerchief to me. I am far to 'loud' and fast to please him. Now Mavourneen, will make a lovely little lady, and he will never have to feel ashamed of her."

Without further speech Judith walked from the room, leaving Carrie to her own bitter thoughts, and that night Mavourneen sat down to write the news to Quentin.

She had promised him when they parted that should she engage herself to any other she would at once acquaint him with the fact, and now, with a great sorrow for him in her heart she fulfilled her word. Her pen travelled very slowly over the paper, and this is what she wrote:—

"MY POOR DEAR QUENTIN,—

"I wish you knew how grieved I am that I must hurt you. You cannot forget how afraid I was that I would never care for you as you wished, or how I refused to give myself to you? Dear, what I then feared has happened, and to day I have promised to marry Mr. Pembroke. Indeed, it was with all my heart I tried not to love him, but I was too weak, and now it would be more cruel than death to lose him. You see, Quentin, I write you plainly that you may not buoy yourself up with false hopes, and if the pain is sharp, it will the sooner be over. And I ask you still to be my friend, and to use all your strength to conquer this love of yours, so that again we may be brother and sister.—Always your loving
"MAVOURNEEN."

CHAPTER V.

SIR BLOUNT PEMBROKE sat in his easy chair, a scowl on his brow, and an angry light in his dark eyes. He was a middle-aged man, with aquiline features; of a somewhat Mephistophelean type, mentally vigorous, though his physical strength had long ago been impaired by his excesses.

"And so you want to be married?" he said, addressing Outram, "and the lady is not that fine girl of Mrs. Carr's? I suppose you know that, unless your choice pleases me I am quite capable of disinheriting you?"

"I am perfectly aware of that, sir," the young man answered, beginning to lose his temper, "and it would not surprise me greatly. It seems to me that as I am the party concerned I should have perfect freedom of choice. At all events, no man shall choose my wife for me."

"Isn't it a little bit impolitic to lose your temper at the outset? Who is the girl? I do you the justice to suppose she is a lady."

"She is Mrs. Carr's ward. I think that should be sufficient guarantee of her respectability. Of her beauty I need say nothing—you have seen her at church."

"You are like most young fools, fond of the angelic type of woman. Give me a girl with some spirit, like that young limb Carrie. If you raged at her she would rage back, not turn to you with a watery smile, and words of feigned forgiveness."

"I fancy," Outram said, with a smile, "you

can hardly be called a judge of the sex. Your being a bachelor rather precludes the idea."

Sir Blount smiled in unison, but grimly; then said, "And pray what is your paragon's name?"

"Kathleen Verity; she comes from Arrah-down, and is an orphan."

He was not looking at his *vis à vis*, or he would have noticed a curious change in him. It was only momentary however, and then Sir Blount said in his ordinary tone, "And pray what were her people?"

"Her mother was a lady, but whatever standing her father had, he was an unmitigated scoundrel for he deserted his wife and child. It only is fair, sir, to tell you that some folks declare Mrs. Verity never was married, but her friend, Mrs. Carr, asserts that she was, although she would not name the church where the ceremony took place, or tell anything of her husband's means or habits."

"That looks uncommonly shady, and I don't expect you believe I would receive a nobody's child here as future mistress? No, my boy, Blount Pembroke is hardly in his dotage yet; but as I am rather tired of hunting about for new heirs, I will meet you thus far. To-morrow you shall bring the girl to me, and if she can give me a satisfactory account of herself—well and good!"

"But you must understand, sir, she has never heard the slightest doubt cast upon her mother's name. You will be careful not to deceive her as to her true position."

"I shall act as I please," grimly. "Now bring out the chess, and tell me the news of the day."

The next morning, Outram led the trembling girl into his uncle's presence. They had never before exchanged greetings, in fact had only met at church, and Mavourneen regarded Sir Blount with awe, not unmingled with dislike and distrust.

When Outram had introduced her, the elder man motioned him to go out, and when he hesitated, said sharply,—

"Are you afraid I shall eat the girl? Leave her to me. You can wait in the ante-room," and seeing there was no help for it Outram went away.

Then Sir Blount regarded Mavourneen so long and intently that she grew more nervous and a red flush mantled her cheek and brow.

"Come here," he said at last, "and let me see what sort of girl has ensnared my heir."

His manner was even more unpleasant than his words, and stung the girl into courage.

"I am not so sure that he is your heir," she said, throwing back her pretty head proudly. "The uncertainty of your temper is not unknown to me."

Sir Blount opened his eyes very widely, and grew more interested in her.

"So my precious nephew has been black-guarding me after the manner of those who wait for dead men's shoes?"

"Mr. Pembroke is a gentleman," she answered, coldly, and the listener chuckled grimly.

"It strikes me he is vastly mistaken in supposing you to be a meek young woman; but I like a girl with some spirit, so let us talk matters over together. Now what account did this young spark give of his prospects when he proposed to you?"

"He told me he had three hundred a year of his own; that we must not rely upon you for assistance, and I was content—more than content—to accept him on those terms."

"Knowing that I wished him to marry Carrie Carr?"

"I did not know that. Sir Blount, and had I, it is small difference your wish would have made. Every man and every woman should choose for him or herself."

"That is your idea. Outram tells me that your mother's was a love-match; pray was she happy in it?"

"You have no right to ask me such a question," Mavourneen answered, trembling again, and her eyes sought his wistfully, as if searching for pity and consideration.

"I have a right to know something of your family. Who and what was your father?"

"I have no family, and my father was a gentleman. It was Father O'Donoghue assured me of that. My mother is not long since dead."

"And you can tell me nothing more? Of course you see yourself how unsuitable a wife you are for my nephew."

"If you sent for me to tell me that I had far better have stayed away, and, indeed, it is not either kind or manly to treat me thus," and she turned to go.

"Come back, you little vixen; but first call in that silly boy."

She obeyed implicitly, and when Outram stood beside her, Sir Blount said,—

"I have nothing to urge against this young lady personally, but I shall countenance no engagement until the close of six months, during which time you (to Outram) will travel, and you (to Mavourneen) will visit me daily. But if you are loyal to each other for that period, I will again consider the matter, though it is by no means certain I shall give my consent to it."

"Then, sir," cried Outram, "you intend fooling us to the top of your bent?"

"That is a somewhat rash conclusion; but say that eventually I refuse to sanction your marriage?"

"Well then, sir, we will do without your consent," his nephew rejoined, coolly. "And now, if you please, I will take Miss Verity home; this interview has not been too pleasant for her."

He drew the girl's hand within his arm, and led her away.

At the door she paused, and looked back at the hard old man, with a strange expression in her beautiful eyes.

"You don't like me, Miss Verity," he said, with a short, hard laugh. "You have either not learnt yet to mask your feelings, or you are too great a fool to be a hypocrite; but, remember, I shall expect you daily."

Her eyes flashed.

"I shall not forget, Sir Blount, although it is not I who will afford you any pleasure; we dislike each other far too cordially!"

And with that she was gone, and Sir Blount sat smiling grimly to himself. Who would believe that she had so much spirit; by her expression she should be meek, and he did not dislike Mavourneen more for her flash of pride; neither did he esteem his nephew less that he dared rebel against his authority. Still he took a wicked pleasure in tormenting the lovers, and when Outram returned he sent for him at once.

"You have determined to agree to my terms?" he asked, gruffly.

"I have. Mrs. Carr advises that I should do so, for Miss Verity's sake."

"And she is not disappointed in the least that you have not chosen one of her girls?" sneeringly.

"Not in the least! I don't believe she ever angled for me."

Sir Blount looked incredulous, but made no further remark upon the subject.

"You will be ready to start to-night; so be quick with your packing, young man."

"To-night!" indignantly. "The notice is very short."

"I intended it to be; I am not going to countenance any philandering, until the six months have expired. And pray, have you any idea where your fiancée's parents were married?"

"Mrs. Carr says somewhere on the continent."

"Well, that is sufficiently vague! Now I have a rider to add to my conditions, and it is this. I give to you the task of discovering where this ceremony took place, and provided you can assure me that Kathleen Verity was born in wedlock, I will not only give my consent to your union, but allow my will to remain as it is."

"But sir," with a perplexed look, "I

haven't a clue, or a single piece of evidence to go upon."

"Exactly so. Well, then, you have the better chance of displaying your genius," with a sardonic smile. "Now if you choose you can run down to the Lodge to prepare your Dolcinea for the parting; for the remainder of the day I shall require your presence here."

Considering himself dismissed Outram returned at once to the Lodge, and finding the Carrs in full family conclave as once imparted his news. Mrs. Carr and Carrie loudly exclaimed against Sir Blount's harshness, and the folly of sending Outram on such a wild-goose chase; but Judith was silent, only in the depths of her cruel eyes there was an almost fiendish look of triumph.

Carrie slipped upstairs to Mavourneen.

"Come down at once, dear," she said. "Mr. Pembroke has returned, and has news for you. Don't be alarmed; he is merely to start on his travels sooner than he anticipated, but then they will be over the sooner."

Mavourneen rose at once; she looked pale and tired, as if the worry of the morning had tried her strength too greatly, but she was calm outwardly.

"You are too good to me," she said, in her sweet voice, which sounded fainter than Carrie had ever heard it. "You are to me a sister," and she lifted her face to be kissed.

"Come!" said the elder girl; "he is waiting, and his time here is very short; and if a pang of jealousy or grief shot through her heart she gave no sign."

Over the parting of the lovers it is well to draw a veil. Perhaps it differed a little from that of many others, save that Outram was so hopeless of any good resulting from his quest; and Mavourneen was fearful lest, after all, Sir Blount was but playing with them.

She had no idea that her lover had any purpose in view—rather she believed his travels to be utterly aimless, the outcome of a freak of his uncle's.

And when he had bidden her good bye, and she had watched his tall, stalwart figure till she could see it no longer, because her eyes were blinded with bitter tears, she turned towards the house with a heavy, heavy heart. Judith met her in the hall.

"And so he has gone?" she asked, with a scornful smile; "and you are prepared to play the love-lorn damsel? Kathleen Verity, I do not think you will ever be Outram Pembroke's wife."

The girl shuddered as though with cold; then, lifting entreating eyes to the calm, cruel face, said,—

"Why is it, Judith, that you so hate me? Have I ever hurt you? It is not that you can be jealous of me, seeing you do not love Outram?"

"Jealous of you?" with a short, hard laugh. "I would rather change lots with my maid than with you!"

"And—oh! why am I so to be pitied or abhorred? In what is it I am different to others?" Mavourneen questioned, quickly and pleadingly.

"Some day I will tell you. It would be a pity that you should remain in ignorance always; and without further speech she went her way."

"I shall acquaint Sir Blount with the facts first," she mused; "and if they make no difference to his decision, then she shall hear the whole story. And I think I am not mistaken in believing she will go away of her own will; then the game will be in my hands. And that letter I found of young Derrick's will help me not a little."

There was no pity in her heart for the helpless, orphan girl, who even now was bewailing her lover's loss, lying prone upon her bed with hidden face.

CHAPTER VI.

Mavourneen sat a book on her lap—from which she had been reading to Sir Blount. B

was that wonderful story, "Sam's Sweet-heart," by Helen Mathers; and having now reached the conclusion she was brooding over the history of its lovely heroine, the sweet, natural Yutha. Sir Blount regarded her curiously a moment, then said,—

"And you believe that so many men would sacrifice all they prized, all old habits, old associations, for the sake of a slip of a girl?"

"They were not all her lovers," the girl answered, dreamily. "You should remember some of them served her, and gave up their lives for her, when she was a child too young to understand their devotion."

The ever-ready flush mounted to her brow, and her eyes grew soft and dewy.

"And pray what is your opinion of Yutha's father?" waiving her last remark.

"He was a villain; and yet, and yet he could not have been all bad. In the end you see he, too, died for her, and nothing in his life became him so well as his death."

"Now, Mavourneen, I suppose you have heard your father tired of your mother, and deserted both her and you, as Yutha's father did? Have you no strictures to pass on his conduct?"

"He was my mother's husband, and she must have loved him, for it broke her heart when he went away. Sir Blount, I would prefer not to speak of him."

"But if he is not dead; if he should return to you, what would you do?"

"For my mother's sake I would go with him if so he desired. My duty he should have always, but my love never!"

"Because he wronged Mrs. Verity?"

"Yes; always because of that."

Sir Blount turned to another subject with characteristic quickness.

"Do you know, young woman, I did my best yesterday to defraud (as you would call it) Outram of his inheritance? Shall I tell you in what way?"

"If you choose; and it is nothing you can tell me of yourself that could surprise me."

Sir Blount laughed.

"You are very candid," he said, "and I believe will respect my confidence. But first let me ask—did Carrie tell you nothing?"

"No."

"Ah! there is a good deal of grit in that girl," with keen appreciation. "Well, as my nephew would not marry her, I proposed myself as her husband. 'Carrie,' I said, 'will you be Lady Blount—will you promise to become my wife?' 'No, I won't!' she answered, flatly, and added I ought to be ashamed of myself. Good gracious, girl! why are you laughing?"

"Pray forgive me!" between ripples of merriment, "I cannot help myself; and surely it was none but Carrie herself could have made her refusal so charmingly blunt."

"I believe you delight in my discomfort. Will it add to your mirth to know she did not hesitate to box my ears?"

It was the first time he had heard Mavourneen laugh; and perhaps, cold and essentially cruel as he was, he liked the sound of her laughter, and not only liked but joined in it; but when both were more composed he said,—

"Those laugh best who laugh last, and I am not too old to make a second venture, and I'll be sworn the handsome Judith would not reject me."

"But it is not Judith you would marry!" with a flash of mischief in her lovely eyes.

"It is she of whom you would be afraid."

"Thank you, my dear; you pay my courage an exceedingly high compliment. And pray, if I followed up my idea, what would you and Outram do?"

"We should marry, Sir Blount," coolly; "we have more than enough between us."

There was something akin to admiration in his look; but he merely said,—

"Was your mother a woman of spirit?"

"She was very quiet and gentle," softly; "she never resented any wrong done her."

"The more fool she. There, girl, don't look so indignant, but get your hat and wrap, and

run away. It must be nearly two o'clock, and I hate my luncheon to be delayed."

So, glad to be released, Mavourneen wished him good-morning, and hurried off to the Lodge. As she slipped into her seat at table Mrs. Carr looked across at her.

"My dear, Judith says that, as your mourning will not allow you to share any of the fun going on round us, she will remain with you this evening. Of course I must go to chaperon Carrie, as there will be quite a large carpet dance."

"Oh, indeed! Indeed, Judith, you are too kind; but I would prefer you should go. There will be much enjoyment you would not care to miss."

"I trust I understand what is due to a guest," Judith answered, with less frigidity than usual; "and if you wish to write to Mr. Pembroke I will make myself conspicuous by my absence."

"But it will be such a sore disappointment to you," urged Mavourneen, who did not relish the idea of an evening spent with Miss Carr, "and I shall find ample amusement amongst my books and music."

"It is very rarely I perform a meritorious action," Judith said, with a strange smile. "At least let me have the opportunity of distinguishing myself to-night."

"Yes, yes, Mavourneen," broke in Mrs. Carr, "and neither Carrie nor myself would consent to leave you alone for so long a time."

The grateful grey eyes met hers a moment, and the girl said, softly,—

"It is too good you all are to me," and was angry with herself that she could not appreciate Judith's self-denial more highly.

At seven Carrie entered the dining-room radiant in coral and cream, and throwing a large cloak over her finery announced she was quite ready to start.

She and her mother were due at a certain Mrs. Goshawk's, where a "harvest home" was to be held, and Carrie declared her intention of running the whole way lest the damp air should take the crispness from her frills and furbelows.

"Rather trying for me," laughed Mrs. Carr, stooping to kiss Mavourneen. "Be good girls whilst we are away."

"Yes," broke in Carrie; "don't have a row royal in our absence. Ta-ta, Ju. I'll convey your kindest regards to all the most eligible young men present."

And so she was gone, and when again she saw Mavourneen's sweet face it was changed almost beyond recognition.

For a long time Judith and Mavourneen exchanged no words. The former appeared engrossed with her book the latter sat playing and singing old Irish ballads, and the tender melodies to which so many of Moore's words are set. But now she broke into a more stirring strain.

"Weep on, weep on, your hour is past,
Your dreams of pride are o'er;
The fatal chain is round you cast,
And you are men no more.
In vain the hero's heart hath bled;
The sage's tongue hath warned in vain.
O, Freedom! once thy flame hath fled
It never lights again!"

And as for a moment she paused Judith's voice, cold and clear, reached her.

"Come and sit close by me; I want to talk to you."

Mavourneen rose, a trifle reluctantly, and closing the piano sat down opposite Judith with her hands loosely folded on her lap, her dewy eyes grown attentive.

"You asked me but yesterday to tell you in what you are different to other girls. Are you still curious? Shall I make all plain to you now?"

"I would be glad to hear what you have to say," Mavourneen answered, quietly; but a faint, vague dread stirred her heart, and her breath came quickly.

"First let me ask you if you love Outram

Pembroke for what he is, not for what he will be?"

The look on the pure young face was an eloquent answer, and Judith went on,—

"Do you love him well enough to sacrifice yourself for his good, to give up all hope of ever being more to him than now—even to resign yourself to the fear of his forgetfulness of you?"

The sweet face was very pale now, and the dark eyes darker with unspoken fear.

"I cannot tell how far my courage might sustain me," in an unsteady voice; "but it would be my endeavour to place Outram first."

"That being the case, you will give him his freedom. If he marries you he would be cut by the whole county; and Sir Blount, knowing the facts of the case, would never consent to such an unequal union. I think it only right you should be acquainted with your own story, and much as it pains me to dwell on such a subject, I hope I shall not be tempted to forego my duty."

"What is it you mean? What is there in my story of which I am ignorant?"

Oh, the poor, pale child! Surely those anguished eyes, that piteous, entreating face, should have won some mercy from the foe.

"What do you first remember, Kathleen? What are your earliest impressions?"

"If I look back, I see myself a tiny child, always watched over and dearly loved by my mother; and she is always sad; so sad that she rarely smiles, and I never hear her laugh" (she was speaking in a dreamy way, as though she had really gone back to old scenes, old associations). "All the people pity her, and the women whisper she is dying of a broken heart. Sometimes she looks at me strangely, and clasping me in her arms, will cry out it were best if we two lay dead together."

She ceased suddenly and bowed her face on her arms. Judith watched her pitilessly, contemptuously, then—"Don't you see to what her words and manner pointed?"

Mavourneen shook her head, but did not glance up! She sat waiting for the blow.

"Do you remember your father? Did Mrs. Verity never speak of him?"

"No; he broke her heart and wrecked her life. Is it you who will wonder his name never passed her lips?"

"Shall I tell you why?" leaning forward, and laying one cold hand upon the girl.

"Your mother had never any right to the name of Verity—she was never married!"

Mavourneen started to her feet. "You lie!" she cried, and the colour rushed lustily into her sweet face; her eyes flashed with dangerous fire. "It is false! my mother was an angel."

"A fallen one," icily. "Did you find any certificate of marriage amongst her papers after her death? Was there any creature who could tell you when and where she became a wife? Was she not friendless to the end of her days because of her sin? And then, when she lay dying, did she not commend you to the care of her old school-friend? Do you not think it strange she should not send you either to her own relatives or your father's. There must have been some at least on one side."

The flush had died from Mavourneen's face, the fire had faded from her eyes. Did not every word Judith uttered go to prove her story? And yet, and yet, could the connect sin or shame with the memory of that dear, dead mother? She leaned against the wall, her hands pressed hard upon her breast, her breath coming in gasps; then with an effort she said, "If, indeed, this tale is true, Outram is free. I am not fit mate for any man of honest birth; but I will not wrong my mother as you would have me do; if she was not legally Mrs. Verity, in Heaven's sight my heart tells me she was, and the villain I call father entrapped her into a false marriage."

Judith laughed shortly.

"Such things do not happen in the nineteenth century. Your mother went to her

shame with open eyes, and no man knowing that would care to link his life with yours, because it is said, 'Like mother, like daughter.'"

What low bitter cry was that which rent the air? What slim figure was it that rushed blindly upstairs only to sink prostrate beside the bed, and to wail in a dreadful undertone? "Oh! my mother! oh, my mother! Come back to me, if but to say I am not the child of sin! Oh! my love, my love, what bitter fate drew us together."

A little later the door opened, and in the dim light a tall and stately figure was seen. "What shall you do now, Kathleen Verity?"

And without rising, the girl answered—"Until my mother's honour is cleared, Outram Pembroke may count himself as free. Go now, I never want to see your face again."

CHAPTER VII.

JUDITH had altered her original plans. She had once intended repeating the story of Mavourneen's birth to Sir Blount; but reflecting that he was an eccentric man, and would probably espouse the girl's cause from sheer perversity, she changed her tactics.

It was in a very self-satisfied mood that she went downstairs and remained there alone until her mother and Carrie returned.

"Where is Mavourneen?" they asked, in a breath, and Judith's face clouded at their affectionate solicitude, but she answered, in a sufficiently equable voice,—

"She complained of being weary and went to bed after tea."

Carrie was disappointed; she liked nothing so well as a confidential chat with her mother's ward, and when she went upstairs stole into the girl's room in the hope of finding her awake. But, apparently, Mavourneen was sleeping quietly, and closing the door Carrie went away.

Early the next morning Mavourneen appeared in the breakfast-room. No one was down but the young housemaid, and she looked alarmed at the unwonted pallor of Mavourneen's cheeks, the unnatural brilliancy of her eyes.

"Surely, miss," she said, deprecatingly, "you don't think of going out such a rough morning, and looking so bad as you do?"

"A walk will be good for me, Annie, but I shall be glad if you will get me a cup of coffee; I am feeling very cold."

In a little while she had made her poor breakfast, and passing into the hall slipped a letter in the bag for Mrs. Carr; then she walked out with firm step into the driving rain and cruel wind.

She had but one desire—to get away from Beachford, to hide herself and her shame away from all; but it soothed her a little to think that Carrie and Mrs. Carr would miss her and grieve for her.

At last the family came down to breakfast, and Mrs. Carr said,—

"I will send some coffee up to Mavourneen; perhaps the poor child is not well—"

Here she was interrupted by the housemaid.

"If you please, ma'am, Miss Verity went out at seven o'clock, and she hasn't come back yet."

Mrs. Carr looked vexed.

"It was simply madness to venture out in such weather," and stretched out her hand to take the letters from Annie.

She read through some of them in a leisurely fashion, but suddenly she started and grew pale as she recognized Mavourneen's familiar writing upon one of the envelopes.

Dreading she knew not what, she tore it open, and with increasing agitation read,—

"DEAR MRS. CARR,—

"This morning I am leaving Beachford for ever, because I know something of my poor mother's story now. Last night it was that

Judith told me I have no right to the name I bear, that I am the child of sin. But I pray you to remember in nothing do I blame my mother; I know she must have been the victim of some cruel trick. I would wish you not to acquaint Outram with my flight. You see we must be strangers now for all time, unless indeed I am so happy as to solve this mystery. I am going back to those who have always loved me, and it will be vain to beg of me to return. Amongst my own countryfolk I will perhaps find rest—but never happiness again! I leave my dear love to you and Carrie, and I will never forget to pray for you, that your lives may be brighter than mine. Oh, my dear friend! my dear friend! there is none can tell you how much I suffer in thus going away from you. Forgive me and forget me! Do not follow me, for that would be only to aggravate my grief. When I have had time to think, time to learn calmness, I will write you again, until when—and always after—believe me your own loving

"MAVOURNEEN."

Mrs. Carr dismissed the maid and then laid the open letter between her daughters.

"Read that," she said, in a hard voice, "and when you have finished, Judith, I shall have something to say to you."

Carrie was loud in her exclamations of anger and grief, but Judith rose, quiet and composed.

"I shall be happy to listen to anything you have to say, mamma. Carrie, you need not go. I am able to endure scorn and anger alike, because I am upheld by the sense of having done my duty."

"Your duty!" almost screamed Carrie. "Was it your duty to drive a poor helpless child from her only home; to tell her foul tales of her dead mother?"

"Carrie, I think you had best leave us," interrupted Mrs. Carr; "this matter rests between Judith and me." And when the girl had obeyed there followed such a stormy scene that the mother was left weeping hysterically, and the daughter went upstairs with a look of cruel resolve upon her handsome face.

She dressed quickly but tastefully, because she wished to produce a favourable impression; then, regardless as Mavourneen had been of wind and rain, went out in the direction of Pembroke Hall. The footman looked aghast when he opened the door to her, and said,—

"Indeed, miss, I dare not announce you; Sir Blount objects to visitors so early in the day."

"Then I must announce myself," she answered, calmly; "my business with Sir Blount allows no delay. Will you take my card and message to him or no?"

She looked so formidable in her haughty beauty that the man decided it would be best to obey her, especially as she slipped a half-sovereign into his hand.

In a short time he returned.

"My master will see you, Miss Carr; please follow me," and he ushered her into a large, handsome room, where Sir Blount was sitting sipping cocoa.

"Excuse me rising," he said, courteously, and not allowing his surprise at her appearance to manifest itself either in look or tone. "I've a touch of my old enemy, the gout. Pray sit down, and allow me to assure you I never was more flattered than by this unexpected and welcome visit."

Her lips curved a trifle scornfully, and she had a faint suspicion that the Baronet was mocking her; but she had her temper well under control.

"I wished to see you about Miss Verity," she said, coming at once to her subject. "I think it but fair to you and Mr. Pembroke to acquaint you with her story. It is a delicate and painful duty, but none the less must I perform it. Sir Blount, this projected marriage can never take place. Kathleen Verity is the child of shame."

His keen, dark eyes rested in cynical scrutiny on her handsome, impassive face; a cold smile relaxed the line of his lips.

"My dear young lady, your news astonishes me, as much as your nice sense of honour delights me. May I beg you to give me full particulars of this disgraceful story? It is a delicate task, as you justly observe, but now you have commenced you must go through with it; and I shall have a word to say to Mrs. Carr on her imprudence in receiving Miss Verity into her home, and foisting her upon respectable society."

Judith began to congratulate herself upon the manner in which Sir Blount had heard her statement, and did not fail to expatiate on Mrs. Verity's misdeemeanors.

"Her name was Eileen Orand, and she was at school with my mother; but she ran away with a man whom nobody knew, and was not heard of for some years. Then she reappeared, and was utterly repudiated by her parents and relatives, because she would not, or could not, give any particulars concerning her marriage or her husband's position. She then returned to Arrahdown, where she remained until her death. I will do the girl the justice to say she was entirely ignorant of these things until last night."

"When your duty compelled you to make them known to her?"

There was something so cynical in his tone that Judith flushed, but otherwise maintained her composure, and continued her story.

"Had I foreseen the result of my disclosure I should hardly have made it. This morning Kathleen Verity stole out of the house, and by this time is well on her way to Ireland."

"What!" cried the Baronet, starting up, and wholly forgetting his gout. "Do you mean she has gone off for good?"

"Here is her letter. I contrived to secure that, but I would not have you deceived by it. It is my opinion she had long resolved to go. She had an Irish lover, and probably it was only Mr. Pembroke's expectations which prevailed upon her to accept him. When she found how matters really stood she turned to her former lover. Please oblige me by looking at this," and she placed poor Quentin's letter before him.

Sir Blount had resealed himself, and was regarding Judith with admiration—whether real or feigned was best known to himself.

"My nephew and I owe you a heavy debt for your disinterested conduct," and with those words he took the note—for it was little more—and read it carefully aloud.

"MAVOURNEEN,—

You have already forgotten me and that night on the sands when I prayed you to give me your promise. Arcon, what shall I say to you? Can I ask you to be false to this man who has stepped into the place I so coveted, who fills your life, and calls your love his own? Ah, sweetheart! there will be none to care for you as I do, and not all the glare and glitter of a new life will atone to you for the loss of your old friends, your old lands. Am I selfish? Well, then it is grief that makes me so, for have I not always your welfare at heart? But one thing let me urge upon you, Mavourneen; let there be no secrecy about your marriage, for it was silence and concealment killed your mother.

"When I am better able to write calmly I will send you a line.—Always yours,

"QUENTIN."

Sir Blount looked up.

"My dear Miss Carr, I really cannot see this proves the girl false. It is not improbable this fellow here presumed upon her loneliness and inexperience. She seemed to me a very innocent child."

"I thought her so once; but recently my eyes have been opened to her shortcomings. She kept up an almost daily correspondence with this Quentin Derrick, and I am sure, had he possessed Mr. Pembroke's advantages, would never have broken her word to him. She is as false as Cressida, and in her case the

proverb 'Like mother, like daughter,' has been verified!"

She paused, for Sir Blount seemed not to be listening. His eyes were turned upon the fire, and his face was not good to see; but when he confronted her he wore his usual half-cynical expression.

"I will at once acquaint my nephew with your statement, and as he is not a man to forgive wanton deception, this ill-starred engagement will soon be ended. I trust, too, in his next choice he will be governed by me, and I should wish it to fall upon one of Mrs. Carr's lovely daughters."

Despite her self-assurance Judith blushed, remembering what hope she nursed in her cold heart.

"I am sure," she said softly, "we regard Mr. Pembroke in the light of a brother, and any misfortune which touches him touches us also. You will assure him that he has our deepest sympathy."

"Oh, that goes without saying. Yes, I will tell him *when I write*. And now, Miss Carr," as Judith rose, "you will allow me to order out the carriage; it is unfit for you to walk back, and you must have a glass of wine before you go."

She accepted the wine with a smile, but refused the carriage obstinately, and as Sir Blount watched her going down the drive, he laughed, sardonically,—

"So you came here without your mother's knowledge, my black-browed beauty, and you think if not the nephew, the uncle! Thanks, no, my stately Jaël!" and he indulged in immoderate mirth. "I'll try what stuff these young fools are made of," he thought next, "and most decidedly I shall not write to Outram—let him finish his wild-goose chase."

The following day, as Quentin Derrick stood watching the tossing, tumbling waves which seemed ready to engulf the little boat struggling from the steamer to the shore, he thought he saw a handkerchief waved to him, and scrambled down to the beach just in time to hear the keel grate upon the sand, and to see a slight figure in black spring out.

A rush of sudden, awful hope held him silent and motionless as the girl came nearer, and now he could see her face, and knew her—changed and haggard as she was for his own dear love—and tried to speak, but failed miserably.

He saw the darkeyes wet with tears, the quivering, tender mouth, and then he felt her arms about his neck, her face hidden on his breast, and heard her dear voice—changed, too, and broken—yet, oh! most sweet—saying,—

"Quentin I have come back to die—to die of my love and my shame!"

The youth's heart stood still for fear, but he did not unclasp her clinging arms; he did not repulse her in any way. It mattered little to him what had passed since they parted; he only knew he loved her with a love that could never die.

"Quentin," she whispered, "they call me the child of sin—is it true? Oh, my friend, is it true?"

He knew then that she was still pure and good, and taking her by the hand led her gently and silently towards his uncle's house.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Come home," was the message Outram received from Sir Blount about a month after the incidents related in the last chapter. Several letters had been despatched; but as he was wandering from place to place, they had failed to reach him.

So now, believing his uncle was acting merely from caprice, he determined to assert his independence by travelling homewards by easiest stages.

And so at last he came to Antwerp, and spent a day in admiring the fortifications, the

magnificent cathedral, and various museums; and returning to his hotel was told that a gentleman waited to see him.

Laughing inwardly, because he believed his visitor to be Sir Blount, he ran lightly up to his room, and, entering, found himself confronted by a handsome young stranger, who bowed with almost foreign courtesy.

"You are Mr. Pembroke?" questioningly. "I have come from Arrahdown to see you, and it is a wild-goose chase you have led me."

"From Arrahdown! Then you are Quentin Derrick? What is your errand—is anything wrong with Mavourneen? Are you her messenger?"

"Much is wrong; but *she* did not send me. She does not know the reason for my absence; but if you really love her you must come with me at once. She is very ill."

"Ill! Can it be possible that was what my uncle's message meant? Why did not Mrs. Carr send for me?"

"Because Mavourneen is at Arrahdown, and you have kept so long silent that I feared her sad story had changed your love."

"What sad story do you refer to?" rising, and hastily tossing his things into a portmanteau. "I am in total ignorance of your meaning."

Word by word Quentin told him all that Judith had done, watching him very keenly the while, and finished with the words,—

"Now tell me truly, Mr. Pembroke, does this tale make any difference to your attachment?"

"No," indignantly. "I believe Judith Carr has trumped up the whole story for her own purposes; and even should it prove true Mavourneen is not to blame, and when she is my wife she will be secure from contempt."

Quentin put out his hand frankly.

"You're a good fellow, Pembroke, and as I cannot win Mavourneen myself, I am glad she is to marry you."

That night they left Antwerp together, Outram having sent an explanatory message to Sir Blount, and long before the journey ended the young men were fast friends.

As they walked up the steep path leading to Father O'Donegal's house a figure which looked familiar to Outram ran to meet them, and a few moments later he recognised Carrie Carr, who looked unusually handsome with the bright flush on her cheeks, the great light in her honest eyes.

"I knew you would come," she cried, catching Outram's hands in hers enthusiastically.

"I told Quentin so; but he scarcely believed me. He thought no Englishman could be trusty. And now I must run away and prepare my patient for the meeting."

"Does she not know of my coming? Could she doubt me?" Outram said, painedly.

"Great Scott! do you suppose we told her? Why, she would have forbidden us to act at all! No, we kept our own counsel. Was it likely Quen and I could see her die of a broken heart just because a malicious woman told her lies? It's no use pinching me, Quen, I will call a 'spade a spade,' and it is a pity if one can't abuse one's own sister."

"Is she very ill?" Outram asked, in a hoarse, strained voice.

"Yes. There don't look so worried; you will be her cure. You see, the thought of what she is pleased to call her shame has gone very near to breaking her heart. But, oh! Outram—I mean, Mr. Pembroke—I got quite a nice letter from Sir Blount this morning, and he begs that as soon as Mavourneen is well enough we shall all go together to Pembroke Hall, as he has an important secret to tell us. He has discovered that Kathleen's mother was really married; but I thought I would give you the pleasant task of telling her this. Now excuse me; I must go before—it would never do to startle Mavourneen in her present weak state," and she at once suited the action to the word.

Just outside Mavourneen's door she paused a moment and leaned her head against the

wall, whilst a great sob rose to her lips, but she choked it back bravely, and, lifting herself erect, entered the sick room with a smile on her face.

"Mavourneen," she said, gently, "Outram has come."

The poor wasted little hands were flung out in wild entreaty.

"Oh! I cannot see him! I cannot see him!" she cried. "It is cruel to ask it. Don't you know I cannot meet his eyes for very shame?"

And then she saw him standing in the open doorway, his face aflame with love, and she tried to hide her eyes from him, but Carrie would not allow that. She lifted her in her strong young arms, and bade Outram come in.

There was such pity in his eyes, such love and tenderness, as they rested on the lovely wasted face, the recumbent figure, that she knew that her sorrowful story had not had power to shake his faith or his devotion.

"Mavourneen," he said, "how could you doubt me?" and was rudely interrupted by Carrie.

"Wait a minute before you go into raptures over each other. I'll just fix the pillows and then make myself scarce. And, young man, tell her the good news first."

Judith and Mrs. Carr were driving towards Pembroke Hall in Sir Blount's own carriage; they had wondered a little over the queer invitation to dine with him, and Judith laid the "flattering unctious to her soul" that this was but a prelude to a proposal.

In his note he had said, "I will have a few friends to meet you, and may I beg the charming Mrs. Carr to be hostess, as unfortunately I have no wife to do the honours, and it is my sincere desire that she will often grace my table in the future."

"That," thought Judith, "evidently means he trusts she will one day be his mother-in-law. Well, I have played for high stakes, and have no doubt of my ultimate success."

As if to substantiate her hopes Sir Blount himself met them in the hall.

"My dear Miss Carr, I am delighted to receive you. Mrs. Carr, you have given me great pleasure. Pray follow me to the drawing-room; I have prepared a little surprise for you."

He flung open the door as he spoke and ushered them in. A lady and a gentleman were sitting in close converse, and as they entered the lady sprang up with a glad little cry and threw her arms about Mrs. Carr.

"You dear old duck, aren't you delighted to see me again? Oh, yes! open your eyes wide with astonishment. I returned last night so muffled up that even you would not have known me, and Sir Blount insisted I should come here and pave the way for a still greater surprise," and then she turned to her sister with a cold, "How do, Judith? You don't look too glad to see me! Why, ma, you're crying! and pray allow me to introduce Mr. Quentin Derrick."

Judith experienced a little pang of doubt and a vague fear that all was not well, but she went through the introduction with a smiling face and such gracious condescension that Carrie almost violated all rules of etiquette by breaking into an ungovernable fit of laughter.

Sir Blount looked often and impatiently at his watch, and was evidently relieved when the door once more opened, to admit Outram and Mavourneen. Judith gave a great start, and her proud face paled, as she wondered by what trickery she had been outwitted. She clenched her hands and waited in apparent calmness for the *dénouement* she felt was inevitable.

Sir Blount took Mavourneen by the hand and led her up to Judith.

"My dear Miss Carr," he said suavely, "I wish you to be the first to congratulate this young lady upon her safe return. We must all of us be glad that the mystery surround-

ing her birth has been satisfactorily explained away."

By a great effort she controlled herself sufficiently to offer her hand and murmur some inarticulate words of gratulation, and when all were seated at table she said, with her sweetest smile,—

"My dear Mavourneen, how changed you are! I should hardly have recognised you—you used to be so very pretty!"

The lovely, delicate face flushed, but the girl made no response to this sally; only Carrie said with considerable acumen, "Used to be! Gracious powers, where are your eyes, Ju?" and, to the latter's angry surprise, Sir Blount burst into noisy laughter.

That night the gentlemen did not linger over their wine; Quentin and Outram joined the ladies immediately, and Sir Blount went to the study to fetch some papers, which he said were to prove Mavourneen's claim to her name.

He was not absent long. In a very little while he joined his guests, and calling them round him displayed the certificate of the marriage solemnised between Eileen Orand and Claude Verity; the ceremony was performed at St. Patrick's, Dublin.

"So you see, my dear," he said, addressing the girl, "you have no cause to blush for your mother."

Judith broke in, forgetful of all but her thwarted revenge. "And pray, Sir Blount, how was this certificate obtained? Forged documents are not unheard-of things."

"My dear lady, it has been in my possession for many years, and had I chosen I could have explained all this mystery long ago; but I had my own objects in view."

"Then all I can say," cried Carrie, "is that you are a detestable old man, and have behaved shamefully to us all round. Ah! yes, it affords you amusement, no doubt, but I wish I might punish you as you deserve!"

He laughed outright at her behaviour, and glanced approvingly at her. "Bravo, you're a good girl, and aren't afraid to speak the truth. Now, Kathleen, what do I deserve?"

"My gratitude, Sir Blount, although if you have been long in the secret, you should have cleared my mother's name."

"That would not have suited my purpose," grimly. "Miss Judith, you are delighted at the turn of events. I know your good heart."

She knew he was mocking her, and was furious. "I should like to know who and what Claude Verity was," she said, quivering with rage and disappointment.

"Claude Verity was, and is, a gentleman. Allow me to introduce you to him under his proper name—Sir Blount Pembroke."

If a thunderbolt had fallen in their midst they could not have been more astonished; on Judith's face anger and incredulity struggled for mastery, but in Mavourneen's eyes there was a look Sir Blount could not understand.

"Come here," he said, laughing heartily at the confusion he had made; "have you nothing to say to your father?"

She shrank back still further from him. "My father!" she said in a strange voice, "and you left my mother to die of a broken heart! I wish I had never known you!"

"Softly, softly, young woman; you used to preach prettily about the duty you owed your unnatural parent. Was it all preaching?"

"No, sir," with a sudden change of manner. "I will try to behave to you as my mother would wish; but, indeed, I do not understand how Claude Verity and Blount Pembroke can be one."

"Nor I," broke in Mrs. Carr; "and if you are jesting, Sir Blount, it is a very sorry jest."

"My dear madam, your indignation but increases your loveliness," with a deep bow, "and does credit to your heart; and as you were poor Eileen's friend, I will explain this thing briefly:—When first I met her I was only Blount Pembroke, and could not afford to offend my father by making an imprudent

match; but like a blind young fool I fancied she was essential to my happiness, and married her. We met by accident, and it was a mere freak of mine to pass myself off as Claude Verity. She knew that I held a higher position than I appeared to do, and guessed that I was living under a feigned name. But she asked no questions; and when she became my wife I forbade her to mention her suspicions to any creature, threatened to leave her if she communicated with her friends, or held any intercourse with them. She was a meek creature, and obeyed me implicitly, and for a little while all went well; but her very sweetness of disposition cloyed me, and at last, in my weariness I left her, with an annuity sufficient for her wants in such an out-of-the-way place as Arrahdown. She never discovered where I had gone or who I really was, and as the time went by I half forgot her. I was unfit for a domestic life, and enjoyed my recovered freedom to the utmost. I don't suppose I ever cast any thought upon my child, and as I had never seen her since her infancy I had no affection for her. I should never have troubled myself to look her up, unless it had been to disappoint my heir. But when she came amongst us, and I saw how pretty she was, and that Outram was willing to marry her, I fully intended acknowledging her, only I did not mean to have my hand forced, and thought I could extract some fun from the affair. And, thanks to Miss Carr, it has been much jollier than I anticipated. You did your duty nobly, my dear lady; but another time, when you assert a mutual acquaintance is not what she should be, either by birth or conduct, please produce proofs!" and he seemed positively to revel in the disgust he had roused in their hearts. Speechless with anger, Judith glowered upon him as though she would have liked to murder him; but Mrs. Carr said sharply,

"Outram! have you nothing to say to this wicked old man? Why, sir, he killed his wife."

"He has behaved badly, I know, but dear Mrs. Carr, I owe him too much utterly to repudiate him, and Mavourneen would not wish it. And if I have said nothing, it is because I was too completely confounded by this sudden disclosure."

The good matron drew her skirts about her. "Come, girls, I will not stay in this man's house another hour. Mr. Derriok, will you go with us? Mavourneen, child, you must forgive Judith for my sake;" and she sailed out of the room.

As Quentin followed, Sir Blount said, "You're not going, surely? We regard you quite as a friend."

"I call no second-hand friend," he retorted, and took Carrie by the arm. She paused, dropped a deep courtesy to Sir Blount.

"You're a miserable old sinner, but upon my word I can't dislike you. Good-bye, Meghastophiles;" then, as she went out with Quentin, "if you were a year or two older, Quen, I would take compassion on you, since you are such a pretty and nice boy."

So Outram and Mavourneen were married, and the girl honestly strove to do her duty to her unnatural father; and if, when at last he was called away, she could not sorrow much, could one wonder?

[THE END.]

FACETIÆ.

A rug is the only thing that has its toes behind.

This world is but a fleeting show, and to most of us all the good seats are taken.

BACHELOR FRIEND (to newly married man): "Why this dejection, dear boy? Have you suffered a disappointment?" "Yes, my wife can't sing." "Why that should not distress you; I think you are to be congratulated." "Ah, but she thinks she can."

"What interest have you in this case?" asked a judge of a lady witness in court. "I'm the plaintiff's wife, sir." "Oh! Then you have a controlling interest in it."

FRIEND of the family (to little Ella, who has just returned from a holiday trip): "You do look well, child. Wherever did you get that rosy colour on your cheeks from?" Ella: "From mamma's dressing-table."

"WHAT is a hero?" asks an editor. A hero is a man who can pass a crowd of boys engaged in making snowballs without turning his head to make sure that they have no designs on him.

"I HEAR your little boy is ill, Mrs. Hitor-miss." "Dear me, yes! The Charlotte rose broke out all over him; and if he hadn't worn the Injun beads as an omelet it would have calumniated fatally, I fear."

HERE is the latest hotel paradox: In looking for your apartment in a hotel, the only thing you can go by is the number of your room; and yet, if you go by the number of your room you will get into the wrong room.

FLOWERS of sulphur sprinkled on a hot shovel, and the fumes inhaled while they are fresh, is recommended for a cold in the head; but Fogg affirms that he will die before he will snuff up burning brimstone. It is not unlikely.

"MR. SMITH gone abroad?" "Yes; my husband is on the Continent for his health." "I thought he was well enough?" "No; there was a weakness in the spinal column of his ledger."

"How painfully thin young Mr. Rail is! And yet they tell me he is a famous athlete. What branch of athletics does he go in for?" "Pedestrianism, I fancy. His appearance always suggests to me a walking match."

"PAPA, what is a model?" inquired little Johnny. "A model is a small likeness of anything." "And is a model man a small likeness of a man?" "A great many of them are, Johnny," replied his pa, musingly, "a great many of them are!"

LADY: "What does the grocery-man want?" Bridget: "Shure, mum, he is after his bill, and it's thrublesome that he is." Lady: "You go out and talk to him. If he makes any trouble, you can Bridget over better that I can."

A SCIENTIST says that a woman who weighs 100 pounds here would weigh 2700 pounds if on the surface of the sun. But not one woman in a thousand will start on a journey to the sun in order to increase her weight. Now if it were the moon it would be different. There is a man in that orb.

WHO MOSES WAS.—It is very common now in the Board schools for teachers to entertain their little scholars with stories. A few days ago one of the teachers in a school not far from the Thames was telling the children about Pharaoh's daughter finding the babe in the bulrushes. "Now, children," said she, "how many of you know anything about Moses?" Only one hand went up. "That's right, Jimmie, I'm glad to see there's one in the school who has heard of him before. Now, who was Moses?" "He's the feller wot they wanted to know where he was when the light went out," exclaimed Jimmie with great gusto. That ended the Scripture lesson for the day.

THE MAIDEN'S DREAM.—The "Dream Clubs" which were organized in the holiday resorts last summer are still in existence in certain circles, and the young ladies meet in each other's houses to relate their dreams. With this preface the following will be intelligible to all: Beau: "Are you a member of the Young Ladies' Dream Club, Jennie?" Belle: "Yes. Oh, we have such delightful times! We meet three times a week and relate the dreams we have had since the last meeting, and some of the dreams are just too funny for anything." Beau: "What was the nature of the last dream you had?" Belle: "Must I tell you?" Beau: "If you please." Belle: "Well, I dreamed that you proposed!"

SOCIETY.

GREAT preparations for the reception of the Queen, who, by the way, has just had an addition to the number of her grandsons presented to her by Princess William of Prussia, were commenced more than a week ago at Aix-les-Bains. It is believed in the neighbourhood that the Queen, who every year sends for one of the *massues* of the thermal establishment of Aix, will in future pay more frequent visits to the place. Her Majesty has bought a large tract of ground on the Tresserve Hill, overlooking the Lac du Bourget, where she will shortly have some large buildings erected.

The Prince of Wales has undertaken at an early date to open the new buildings of the College of Preceptors in Bloomsbury-square, recently erected at a cost of over £16,000.

The Duke of Connaught had arranged to proceed on a tour of inspection, when the following places were to be visited: Ahmednagar, Mhow, Neemuch, Nusseerabad, Ajmere, Mount Abo, Deesa, Rajkote, and Baroda. His Royal Highness would leave Poona on Jan. 12, accompanied by the Adjutant-General, the Quartermaster-General, the Assistant Adjutant-General, Royal Artillery, the Military Secretary, the Esquerry-in-Waiting, the Surgeon-Major, and the Aide-de-Camp in Waiting.

The Princess Louise and the Marquis of Lorne have been to Rome. They were met at the station by Sir John Savile Lumley, Her Majesty's Ambassador, accompanied by the secretaries of Embassy, Messrs. Kennedy, Beauclerk, Adam, and Mrs. Beauclerk; and after partaking of luncheon at the Embassy they proceeded to Naples.

The Duchess of Edinburgh and the Princess Louise have returned to Malta from Naples, on board the despatch vessel *Surprise*, and disembarked under a royal salute. Their Royal Highnesses, on landing, were received by Gen. Sir John Lintorn Simmons, the governor, accompanied by his staff, a guard of honour being drawn up on the quay.

PRINCESS MARY ADELAIN, in celebration of the Jubilee, has signified to the chairman of the Richmond Select Vestry her willingness to open the Boccleugh Public Gardens and Park on Saturday, May 14. The Queen was first asked to confer a distinction upon Richmond by opening the estate in person, as lady of the manor, but was compelled to decline the request. It has been decided that one-half of the subscriptions received should be appropriated for the benefit of the poor and the school division of the parish, and that the remaining half be divided in equal proportions between the Imperial Institute and the Richmond Hospital.

THE marriage of the Right Hon. Sir John Rose, Bart., G.C.M.G., Receiver-General of the Duchy of Cornwall, and Julia Marchioness of Tweeddale, at the Chapel Royal, though strictly private, was a very stylish affair. The bridegroom was accompanied by Gen. Sir Charles Brownlow. The bride, who was accompanied to the church by her sister, Mrs. Jenne, was received, on alighting from her carriage, by her brother-in-law, Mr. Jenne, who conducted her to the chancel, and afterwards gave her away. Her ladyship was handsomely attired in dark heliotrope velvet, with bonnet to match. Amongst those present at the ceremony were Elizabeth Duchess of Wellington, the Marquis and Marchioness of Tweeddale, the Earl and Countess of Cathcart, Lord and Lady John Hay, Louisa Lady Ashburton, the Right Hon. Sir Robert and Lady Emily Peel and Miss Peel, &c.

THE Duke of Cambridge will preside at a public dinner at the Hotel Metropole on Tuesday, April 19th, in aid of the funds of the Ventnor Consumption Hospital.

STATISTICS.

THE San Francisco Bulletin claims for San Francisco a population of 275,000 whites and 25,000 Chinese.

THE total footings of the school census give Chicago a population of 703,817, an increase during the last year of almost 75,000.

One million eggs of the whitefish, with 50,000 eggs of our lake trout, have been sent to Switzerland. When hatched the young fry will be placed in the Swiss lakes, the lakes of Zurich, Zug, and Geneva, each taking 200,000 whitefish and 10,000 lake trout.

THE RELIGION OF IRISH MAGISTRATES.—A Parliamentary return shows that of the 5,065 magistrates in Ireland, 3,780 are Protestants, 1,229 Roman Catholics, seven are of other religious persuasions, and the religion of 49 is unknown. Of the Protestants, 3,343 are Episcopalian, 326 Presbyterians, 52 Methodists, 30 Quakers, and 29 Unitarians.

GEMS.

BOOKS: lighthouses erected in the sea of time.

MAN should trust in God as if God did all, and labour himself as if man did all.

SUCH as thy words are; such will thy affections be esteemed; and such will thy deeds as thy affections, and such thy life as thy deeds.

HE that would undermine the foundations of our hope for eternity, seeks to beat down the column which supports the feebleness of humanity.

WHEN you go home fill the house with joy, so that the light of it will stream out of the windows and doors and illuminate even the darkness.

THE path of duty lies in what is near, and men seek for it in what is remote; the work of duty lies in what is easy, and men seek for it in what is difficult.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

DEVILLED BISCUITS.—Butter some small water biscuits on both sides, and sprinkle freely with cayenne, then cover one side with cheese made into a paste with made mustard, and grill them; serve very hot. Anchovies, curry paste, or chutney can be used instead of the mustard.

CURRY TOAST.—Wash and pound finely ½ lb. of anchovies, mix them with some curry powder, a little mustard, a few drops of vinegar or lemon juice, and some butter. Have ready some fingers of bread fried a golden brown, cover them very thickly on one side with the above mixture, and serve very hot.

TO STAIN WOOD.—Various methods have been devised for treating the surface of certain woods so as to produce the most perfect imitations possible of rosewood, walnut, etc., but some of the most attractive work in this line is effected by simply spreading on the surface of the material a concentrated solution of hypermanganate of potassa, this being allowed to act until the desired shade is obtained. Five minutes suffices ordinarily to give a deep colour—a few trials indicating the proper proportions. The hypermanganate of potassa is decomposed by the vegetable fibres with the precipitation of brown peroxide of manganese, which the influence of the potassa, at the same time set free, fixes in a durable manner on the fibres. When the action is terminated the wood is carefully washed with water, dried, and then oiled and polished in the usual manner. The effect produced by this process is really remarkable. On the cherry, especially, it develops a beautiful red colour which resists well the action of air and light.

MISCELLANEOUS.

It was a very proper answer to him who asked why any man should be delighted with beauty? That was a question that none but a blind man could ask, since any beautiful object doth so much attract the sight of all men that it is in no man's power not to be pleased with it.

A rope is made from the fibre of the magney which is used in the mines and for the cordage of ships on the western coast. The poorer classes of Mexico thatch the roofs with the leaves, and these being concave serve as gutters to conduct the water away from the eaves.

LENIENCY OF FASHION.—There never was a period when fashion was so lenient, even leaning towards economy, as it is at the present time. Almost everything is worn, and the changes from season to season have been so slight that oftentimes a skillful manipulation of old things brings them out in a fashionable guise.

At Venice the reproduction of the old palatial furniture is a thriving industry, and the same at Florence; but it possesses little or no artistic value. The ebony is black-stained wood; the stips are bone, not ivory; the shapes and patterns are carefully copied, and the prices are not excessive. Good patterns are a distinct gain in furniture; but the modern productions will not have the lasting qualities of the old.

EACH one can do something to regulate the innate love of novelty within himself, so as to make it available for good. First of all, he must recognize and not ignore it, then he must make it the exception and not the rule. He must accept sameness, not as an evil to be done away with, but as the necessary and serviceable warp and woof of life, on which the embroidery of change must be skillfully and sparingly introduced. Thus novelty will never lose its charm and its sources will be kept fresh and invigorating.

The fibres of the leaves with the thorns at the end are applied to manifold uses. The edges of the leaves are indented; at each indented is a spine. These spines are frequently so strong as to serve the Indians for nails. A needle and thread is also furnished the natives by the simple process of pounding the leaf so as to soften the pulp, then scraping the latter away, allowing the fibres with thorns attached to remain. These are dried by hanging in the sun a few days, and the Indian woman has her needle, which is smooth, and not liable to rust, and her thread to sew her coarse dress made from "petal flax" (a textile fabric of this plant), prepared in the crudest manner, yet stronger than cotton which has gone through many processes of manufacture.

THEY NEVER GO OUT "TO SEE A MAN."—The Victoria Theatre, of Gothenburg, is a large, circular, wooden building, absolutely undecorated within or without. Within it is painted stone colour; not a curtain, flag or even an upholstered chair to relieve the monotony. Little tables are around everywhere. The pit was peppered with them; they crept almost unseen into the boxes, and peeped forth from the dress circle, while the higher tier of seats had to manage with a ridge not unlike those used for books in church pews. Upon every one of these tables and ridges were deposited little silver-coloured trays, with small spirit bottles and not infrequently sandwiches, tinned, smoked fish, and pickles. There was but little beer consumed. Every tray was literally overflowing with bottles and glasses. Thick tobacco smoke from hundreds of cigars and pipes permeated the atmosphere. I was told that the audience represented the bourgeois class of Gothenburg. There were certainly not many handsome women present. The fair sex were not dressed in good taste. About half-a-dozen white bonnets in the place; all the rest sombre colours.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

L. Q.—Paint with tincture of iodine, and wear very easy shoes.

NETTA.—January 3rd, 1841, came on Sunday, and August 16th, 1868, also on Sunday.

L. D.—1. Your circulation is probably weak. 2. The 12th of June, 1850, fell on a Wednesday.

SNOWDROP.—1. Your hair is light golden brown. 2. Bread should be broken at a dinner table. 3. R-ginald means "Royal."

E. S.—It would not be improper at a social gathering for the gentleman to request the pleasure of a dance; but it is always wise to be reserved with a lady who manifests no desire for your acquaintance.

TOM.—There would be nothing improper or unusual in presenting the lady with a second ring. We presume that you are engaged to be married to her. If not, you had better propose at once.

MATTIE.—The young man is a trifler, and cares very little for either of you. It would be a good plan for you to confront him with evidences of his deceit and perfidious behaviour.

G. H.—You had better make up your mind at once, and accept one of these admirers. We cannot decide for you. Probably the fairer will prove as devoted a husband as the other. He is a loyal lover.

J. H.—The word Yankee is believed to have been derived from the manner in which the Indians endeavoured to pronounce the word English, which they rendered *Yenghees* or *Yonghees*—hence the word Yankee.

C. L. D.—To stain cherry in imitation of old mahogany, digest logwood chips in vinegar or acetic acid for twenty-four hours or more. When ready to use, heat the solution, then dip the wood until the suitable colour is obtained.

BESSIE.—The boy or man is expected to open the conversation. Young ladies are privileged to bow first when in the street. To boys and girls no very stringent rules of etiquette apply. They are expected to be civil and modest in their manners.

C. P.—It would be quite correct to give a present after having received several. A cigar-case, a worked tobacco-pouch, a nice purse with the gentleman's initials stamped in gold on it, a pair of worked slippers, would all or any of them be suitable and useful presents.

W. F.—A fair cologne water may be made as follows: Alcohol at 85 deg., 10 quarts; dissolve in it essence of neroli petit grain, half an ounce; essence of rosemary, 2½ drams; essence of lavender, 1½ drams; essence of clove, half a dram; essence of peppermint, half a dram; essence of bergamot, 12½ drams; lemon, 12½ drams; essence of Portugal, 7½ drams; tincture of benzoin, 1½ drams.

B. T. W.—The "harvest moon" is the moon near the full at the time of harvest, or about the time of the autumnal equinox, and rises immediately after sunset, at about the same hour, for several consecutive days. This phenomenon is accounted for by the small angle of the ecliptic and the moon's orbit with the horizon. We hope you understand all this, but unless you are a student of astronomy you probably will not.

H. H.—As to protection from the cold, if the whisky could be continuously administered without producing intoxication, its effect would be more certain in retaining the vital heat than any which could be produced by coffee. But the latter, if taken hot, would have the advantage in the contrast because it would not lead to inebriety. Neither coffee in solution nor whisky contains any appreciable nutritive qualities.

E. N.—Either of the systems of phonography referred to will serve your purpose, but we cannot pretend to state which is the better. Both come highly recommended, and both possess features which no other systems published at the present time can equal. It would be safe, therefore, to get either, and as you progress in the art, you may be able to understand which of them is best adapted to your standard of intelligence.

ROSE S.—If the gentleman with whom you have been corresponding has ceased writing to you, without, as you state, any cause on your part, and if you have satisfactory proofs that he is not deterred from writing on account of sickness, you can understand by his silence that the correspondence has become irksome. The only course to pursue under such circumstances is never to write to him again on any pretence.

B. V.—L'iments or washes to promote the growth of the hair can always be employed, with greater or less success, so long as there is any vitality left in the hair-follicles or roots. If, on the other hand, these are entirely dead or destroyed, there is no possibility of producing a new crop of hair. This will be evidenced by the shining or glistening appearance assumed by the scalp under such circumstances. The loosening of the hair which frequently occurs in young and middle-aged persons will generally, if not attended to, become real baldness. On the contrary, if proper care is exercised, the hair will grow afresh and assume its pristine condition. The practice of immersing the head in cold water morning and night, drying it thoroughly, and then brushing it until a warm glow pervades the scalp, is found to produce salutary effects. When baldness occurs in patches, the skin should be well brushed with a soft tooth-brush, dipped in distilled vinegar, morning and evening.

L. S. D.—The inventor of gas illuminating purposes was William Murdoch, and it was while employed at Watta's Soho Works, Birmingham, that he brought it into practical use. This was in 1802, at the illuminations in honour of the peace of Amiens.

E. F. H.—Mme. Gris, the celebrated singer, was twice married. Her first husband was M. de Meloy. Her marriage with him proved unhappy and was judicially dissolved. She subsequently married Signor Mario, in company with whom she visited the United States in 1854.

F. C. J.—To make mead, take twelve gallons of water, twenty pounds of honey, and the whites of six eggs. Let all boil for one hour; then add cinnamon, ginger, cloves, mace, to your taste, and a little rosemary. When cold, add one spoonful of yeast, from the brewer, and stir it well. The mead will be good in twenty-four hours.

W. W. A.—To impart a gloss to shirt-fronts, collars, and cuffs, to one tablespoonful of starch put one of cold water; beat very smooth, and add another tablespoonful of water; then pour on boiling water until it becomes the consistency required; add a very little melted white gum, and add, also, a few shreds of white wax. If the articles be carefully ironed they will present the appearance desired.

F. W. W.—The Tontine, a kind of life annuity, was originated by Lorenzo Tonti, a Neapolitan, who introduced it into France about the middle of the seventeenth century. The subscribers or their representatives were divided into ten classes, and an annuity was apportioned to each class according to their age, the survivors deriving an increased annuity as their associates died, and the last survivor receiving the entire annuity of the class until the close of his life.

SWEET FANCIES.

Dear love, I feel as if with thee,
From all the troublous world apart!
The beating of thy tender heart
I almost hear, so close to me
Thou seemest. Is it Cupid's spell,
Or does thy spirit near me dwell?

I wish the wintry sunset ray,
That thro' thy window softly falls,
Gilding across the tinted walls
Of thy fair nest at close of day
Would linger, and with gentle rest,
Above thy tender bosom rest;

Then pause awhile its quivering dart,
To write, with swiftly narrowing line,
A prayer, a word, one little sign,
To tell thee what is in my heart,
And at thy shrine devoutly lay
The love my lips would fondly say

I wish the few pale flowers that bloom
These wintry days, upon the air
Would breathe my soul's adoring prayer,
In their frail breaths of faint perfume,
And wake in thee, with softer sigh,
The shy, sweet wish that I were nigh.

When each had given its last sweet sigh,
Happy because it died afar
To thee; then, shining silver clear,
Would that the star-points in the sky
Could shed on thee a softer light,
And plead for me the weary night!

C. G. T.

M. T.—"Attic talk" is a term used to denote the delicate wit and flavour of the conversations of the ancient Athenians. Athens was the principal city of the province of Attica, in Greece, and its people were renowned for their refinement and elegance; and Attic, as an adjective, means "marked by such qualities as were characteristic of the Athenians," as Attic faith, Attic purity, Attic style, and Attic wit.

D. C. L.—So many young men and women are stage-struck, and anxious to figure as Romances and Lady Macbeth that it is refreshing to read the letter you have sent, saying you desire to leave the stage, and we certainly believe you can get work in a lawyer's office with your knowledge of French and Latin. We should advise you to apply in person to some lawyer when your company arrives, and believe us you have our best wishes.

M. S.—To remove grease and dirt from cloth, place a piece of blotting paper under the article to be cleaned, then rub upon the spots some pure benzine. After the spot is removed continue to rub with a dry cloth until the benzine is evaporated. The object of putting the blotting paper under the garment is to avoid a circular stain which would otherwise be made. The benzine drives the grease through the cloth, and it is absorbed by the blotting paper.

D. F. S.—The young lady referred to acted in a manner which it would be difficult to excuse even on the score of ignorance of the proprieties of life. It may have been thoughtlessness on her part; still, at the same time, she must have been fully aware of the obligation taken upon herself when she became your affianced. You should carefully weigh the chances of a recurrence of a similar nature before uniting yourself for life to one who appears to think so lightly of a really serious and binding obligation. Endeavour to obtain a full explanation of her untoward conduct, and if you find her unworthy of the love you have shown, do not hesitate for a moment in severing a tie which might in after years bring sorrow to both parties concerned.

LENA.—If you intend to marry the young gentleman, you might accept the gift of a watch for a birthday present, but under no other circumstances. A lady never allows any gentleman but her betrothed to give her other gifts than fruit, books, and flowers. The colour of the hair enclosed is dark-brown.

CLAUDIA.—1. Edith means "peacebringer"; Ella, noble. 2. It should be eaten with the fingers. 3. Hair very dark brown; not very coarse. 4. Both should bow together when introduced. The lady should always acknowledge the gentleman first should they meet afterwards.

H. B.—If nature has not blessed you with a very clear complexion art will not produce one. Live temperately, avoid causes of excitement and worry, and be in the open air as much as you can. There is nothing like vigorous exercise to quicken the circulation and clear the skin.

EMMA.—Five feet eight inches is above the ordinary height of women; but if you carry yourself with dignity and grace your height will be an advantage instead of a defect. A small woman is never as grand-looking as a tall one. Your hair is black, and very fine and pretty. You are a brunette. Your writing is exceptionally good.

E. A. G.—Perhaps by this time you have made friends with your jealous L.V. If you have not, send him a nice little card, with the olive branch of peace printed upon it. Then when "all is lovely" between you, send him a little, kindly, tender, lecture on jealousy, but mind you, don't you wake the green-eyed monster again by your propensity to flirt a little.

MILAN.—To make gutta-serena oment for fastening leather, dissolve a quantity of gutta-serena in chloroform—enough to make a fluid of honey-like consistency. When spread it will dry in a few minutes. Heat the surface at a fire or gas flame until softened, and apply them together. Small patches of leather can be thus cemented on boots, &c., so as almost to defy detection. Shoemakers employ this cement with great success.

CONSTANT READER.—Please in future adopt a more distinctive signature. A gem ring is certainly the most suitable by far; a plain gold band is reserved for the wedding ring, and a chased one with buckle for keeper. We cannot give you the names of stones to make the word you require. What is called a "regard" ring (ruby, emerald, garnet, amethyst, and diamond, is often given, but it is expensive.

O. S. S.—A man may be a great lawyer and not be a great orator. Fair speaking abilities will enable you to reach the first rank at the bar, if you are possessed of the requisite mental capacity, and other qualifications. Men should not be judged by the size of their heads. O—a man may have a large head, but an inactive brain; another man may have a small head, but an active brain, and the latter may outstrip the former in every pursuit.

L. V.—To make bran bread, to one quart of bran rub in a teaspoonful of salt, and very thoroughly two teaspoonfuls of cream of tartar; then add to each tablespoonful of tea, and mix in sufficient milk to make a stiff batter. Dissolve one teaspoonful of soda in two tablespoonfuls of cold water, and stir in thoroughly and quickly. Bake slowly one hour. This will keep fresh and moist three days, and be relished by those who cannot eat "bran bread" prepared in other way. Or, if it be preferred to use yeast, then take a sponge of wheat flour; when it is light, add salt and a small quantity of bread, stirring in bran flour with a spoon until it is quite stiff. Let it rise, and bake a little longer than the same sized wheat loaf.

D. F. F.—Do not repine because you are not a heaven-born genius. The endowments of nature we cannot command, but we can cultivate those given. "My experience," remarked Sir Fowell Buxton, "is that men of great talents are apt to do nothing for want of vigour. Vigour, energy, resolution, firmness of purpose—these carry the day. Is there one whom difficulties dishearten, who bends to the storm? He will do little. Is there one who will conquer? That kind of man never fails. Let it be your first study to teach the world that you are not wood and straw—that you have some iron in you. Let men know that what men say you will do, that your decision made is final—no wavering; that, once resolved, you are not to be allured or intimidated.

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London: Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by J. R. SPECK; and Printed by WOODFALL and KINDERSLEY, Milford Lane, Strand.